

***Obshchestvennyi Kontrol'* (Public Scrutiny) from Discourse to
Action in Contemporary Russia:
The Emergence of Authoritarian Neoliberal Governance**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the emergence and proliferation of public consultative bodies (PCBs) in contemporary Russia. Created by the government and regulated by law, PCBs are formal groups of NGO leaders, academics, journalists, entrepreneurs and public figures selected by the state, that perform advisory, monitory and support functions to government departments and individuals at federal, regional and municipal levels. The concept of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* (public scrutiny) is employed by Kremlin to refer to the dual activities of oversight and assistance, which PCBs are intended to enact. First appearing ten years ago with the foundation of the Federal Public Chamber in 2004, there are now tens of thousands of PCBs in operation across the country.

This thesis constitutes the first systematic analysis of PCBs in English. It uses a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach in order to explore the extent to which the portrayal of PCBs in government discourse corresponds to the practices enacted through these institutions in three regional case studies of Moscow, St Petersburg and Samara. It finds that although PCBs are presented by federal and regional leaders as means for citizens merely to assist the authorities in the performance of tasks decided by the state, in practice PCBs can enable citizens modestly to influence policy outcomes and occasionally to shape public agendas. They therefore cannot be dismissed as mere 'window dressing' for the authorities.

The thesis shows that PCBs were created as part of the market reform of the Soviet-era public sector, in which processes of privatisation, outsourcing and decentralisation reduced the state's ability to make public policy without input from domestic non-state actors. It argues that the limited participation in governance afforded to citizens through PCBs exemplifies practices of 'authoritarian neoliberal governance', a concept that captures the attempts by the state to control policy outcomes produced through new public participatory mechanisms arising from the marketization of state bureaucracy. Although the thesis focuses on the case of Russia, the concept of 'authoritarian neoliberal governance' raises the question of the existence of commensurable mechanisms in other non-democratic polities.

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A Note on Transliteration

In this thesis, I have used the BGN/PCGN romanisation system for Russian, which renders 'я' as 'ya', 'ю' as 'yu' and 'е' as 'ye' after vowels, soft signs and at the beginning of words. However, I have rendered 'ё' as 'yo', instead of leaving it untransliterated, since it more accurately reflects the intended pronunciation for those unfamiliar with the Cyrillic alphabet. Borshchëv thus becomes Borshchyov, yeshë becomes yeshyo. Nonetheless, I have used common anglicised forms of popular Russian names, such as Yeltsin, Gorbachev, Khrushchev, Evgeny, Togliatti and so on. Regarding the names of Russians who publish in English cited in the thesis, I have tried to be faithful to the ways in which they transliterate their own names. This means that in some cases, Alexei becomes Alexey, Andrei becomes Andrey, and Aleksandr becomes Alexander. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from Russian to English are my own.

Introduction

The end of the Cold War has been interpreted as the ‘global consolidation of the neoliberal economic project’ with formerly state controlled economies opening up to global markets across the post-Soviet space.¹ It is widely perceived that there is now ‘no alternative’ to the existing global capitalist order as the former communist countries have become embedded (albeit to different extents) within global financial and governance networks.² And yet there is a great deal of regional, national and local variety in the forms this order takes and the contentions that arise as it is established across the world. The Russian state, of course, has enthusiastically embraced market capitalism, particularly in the Putin era, and continues to implement administrative reforms that restructure the Soviet-era state bureaucracy along market principles.³ The subject of this thesis is the emergence and proliferation of institutions created as part of these reforms, which aim to increase civic participation in both local and federal level governance through the implementation of practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol*. In this introduction, I first set out the object of research and present my argument, before describing the process I undertook to complete the thesis and addressing methodological issues. I end with an outline of the structure of the thesis.

Obshchestvennyi Kontrol and the Network of Public Consultative Bodies

Promoted by the Kremlin as a means to reduce corruption, extend civic participation and downsize the Soviet-era administration, *obshchestvennyi kontrol* can be literally translated into English as ‘public oversight’, ‘public monitoring’ or ‘public scrutiny’.⁴ However, I have chosen to leave it untranslated in this thesis as

¹ O. Worth, *Hegemony, International Political Economy and Post-Communist Russia* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2005), pp. 1; see also B. Jessop, ‘Liberalism, Neoliberalism and Urban Governance: A State-Theoretical Perspective’, *Antipode*, Vol. 34, No. 3, (July 2002).

² F. Fukuyama, ‘The End of History?’, *The National Interest*, 1989, <http://www.wesjones.com/eoh.htm#source> (accessed 26 April 2010); U. Beck, *The Reinvention of Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), p. 3; R. Sakwa, *Postcommunism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999), pp. 3; W. Outhwaite and L. Ray, *Social Theory and Postcommunism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 2.

³ S. Prozorov, *The Ethics of Post-Communism: History and Social Praxis in Russia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), pp. 67.

⁴ Some English texts have translated it as ‘public control’, but I consider this a grave mistranslation. ‘Control’ in English means to manage, that is, to make decisions in full possession of relevant facts and to steer the course of events. *Kontrol* in Russian means to monitor or check the decisions made by others; it thus implies a limitation of sovereignty not present in the English word. This distinction is very important for the relationship between state and society inculcated by the

the concept has no agreed formal English translation and, as such, those just posited either do not refer to a specific set of practices (public oversight, public monitoring) or they refer to slightly different ones (public scrutiny). The institutions created by the state to operationalise *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* have been termed public consultative bodies (hereafter PCBs),⁵ and comprise public councils (*obshchestvennyye sovety*), public chambers (*obshchestvennyye palaty*), public monitoring commissions (*obshchestvennyye nablyudatel'nyye komissii*), and various derivatives thereof.⁶ They are advisory bodies, created by federal law or decree, often linked to government agencies or individuals and are composed of members of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), think tanks and academia - as well as business leaders and public figures from the media and the arts - who do not generally hold other formal positions within the government. Their main tasks are to provide a mixture of scrutiny of and assistance to the authorities, who are often able, directly or indirectly, to select a proportion of their members. In the last five years, the number of these bodies has mushroomed, with tens of thousands currently in operation at federal, regional and municipal levels and linked to one another in a growing network with the Federal Public Chamber at the centre. In July 2014, legislation was passed that delimited and codified practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, linking it exclusively to the PCB network; until then, its legal status was vague, diffused across various legislative acts and contested in practice by civic groups. My object of study is thus very much an emergent one.

Little has been written in English on the proliferation of PCBs, with most studies hitherto focussing on the activities of the first and largest such body, the Federal Public Chamber, and its regional incarnations. Here, analyses can be divided into two strands, the first of which considers public chambers as representative of Putin's vision for state-society relations and the second of which sees them as part of a broader trend towards the evisceration of democratic institutions in the country. Conceding that the Chamber has proven to be less of a 'puppet' than initially anticipated, scholars in the first group conclude that the

institutions that enact *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*. However, when citing directly from sources that have translated *kontrol'* as 'control', I have remained faithful to the source from which the citation came.

⁵ M. Gorny, 'Obshchestvennyye konsul'tativnyye struktury pri organakh vlasti: opyt Sankt Peterburga', *Teleskop*, No. 2, (2011).

⁶Gorny, 'Obshchestvennyye konsul'tativnyye struktury pri organakh vlasti'.

Chamber embodies the Kremlin's stultified and corporatist vision of civil society. Alfred Evans states that

The Putin administration speaks of the need for a vigorous civil society but interprets civil society as a network of organizations that, while remaining technically outside the state, will be co-opted to assist the leadership of the political regime in pursuing the objectives that it has chosen for society.⁷

James Richter similarly concludes that, 'rather than empowering civil society to make demands upon the bureaucracy... the Public Chamber's structures and practices instead work to reaffirm the Kremlin's centrality as the ultimate arbiter of Russian politics.'⁸ Both Evans and Richter see the Public Chamber as a move to co-opt Russian civil society as part of a broader strategy to consolidate Putin's 'power vertical'.⁹ In other words, the Public Chamber represents an attempt to enlist the assistance of society in state-determined goals.

In a later article, James Richter explored the state discourse surrounding the proliferation of regional public chambers and situated them in the context of Russian state's attempt to instatiate a new, specifically Russian model of democracy, 'sovereign democracy'. While my research confirms the Russian state's vision of civil society presented by Richter as 'a unified public sphere serving the interests of the whole', I also add to this interpretation on two levels.¹⁰ First, I show that economic considerations, more than democratic ones, are used to justify the emergence and proliferation of PCBs in state discourse, with citizens urged to become active in order to improve Russia's position in the international economy. Second, I demonstrate that PCBs do not always produce this unified vision *in practice*, and that PCBs can sometimes influence public policy. This highlights the

⁷ A. Evans, 'The First Steps of Russia's Public Chamber: Representation or Coordination?', *Demokratizatsiya*, (Fall, 2008).

⁸ J. Richter, 'Putin and the Public Chamber', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 1, (January – March 2009).

⁹ See also J. Richter, 'The Ministry of Civic Society? The Public Chambers in the Regions', *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 56, No. 6, (November-December 2009).

¹⁰ J. Richter, 'The Ministry of Civil Society? The Public Chamber and the Regions', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.56, No. 6, (November/December, 2009).

advantage of the Critical Discourse Analysis approach, which enabled me to explore how far the state's vision is operationalised.

The second group of scholars situates the Public Chamber within a movement towards the evisceration of democratic institutions in Russia. Richard Sakwa has posited that the Chamber is one of a number of 'para-constitutional' intuitions that were 'designed to enhance efficacy but in practice undermined the development of a self-sustaining constitutional order, the emergence of a vibrant civic culture and above all denied the supremacy of the normative state.'¹¹ In his view, the Public Chamber is a paternalistic body that advances the regime's own preferences and has 'eclipsed the Duma's public advocacy role.'¹² Similarly, Nikolai Petrov, Masha Lipman and Henry Hale argue that the Chamber is one of a number of 'substitute institutions', which are

Intended to serve some of the positive functions of real democratic institutions, such as providing the regime with societal feedback on pending legislation—but without holding authorities fully accountable before the public and without putting rulers' hold on power at risk in the way that true democratic institutions would.¹³

They claim that these bodies are symptomatic of Russia's 'over-managed democracy', a regime type characterised by highly centralized state authority, the formal institutions of democracy and the 'systematic gutting of these institutions and their frequent functional replacement by substitutions—often either outside the constitutional framework or in violation of the spirit of the constitution—that are created by and highly dependent on central authorities.'¹⁴ Likewise, Brian Taylor echoes the diagnosis of the Public Chamber as a 'substitute institution', claiming that although they do not create any direct harm, such formations are designed to

¹¹ R. Sakwa, *The Crisis of Russian Democracy: The Dual State, Factionalism and the Medvedev Seccession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 49.

¹² Sakwa, *The Crisis of Russian Democracy*, pp. 164.

¹³ N. Petrov, M. Lipman, and H. Hale, 'Over-managed Democracy in Russia: Governance Implications of Hybrid Regimes', Carnegie Papers, Russia and Eurasia Program No. 106, (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010).

¹⁴ Petrov, Lipman and Hale, 'Over-managed Democracy in Russia'.

‘take the place of more independent civil society organisations and more publically accountable state institutions.’¹⁵

Both these interpretations view the Public Chamber as evidence of the erosion or distortion of democratic principles in contemporary Russia, the former through the corporatisation of the public sphere, the latter through the circumvention of constitutional institutions. If we extend these analyses to the expansion of the PCB network *in toto*, the former would likely argue that PCBs represent the systematic stifling of a vibrant civil society; the latter would claim that PCBs have been created because the unchecked use of the formal institutions of representative democracy is perceived too risky by the regime, but that ‘managed democracy’ does not give sufficient feedback from society. These are both useful interpretations that explain the relationship between the development of PCBs on existing social and political institutions. However, they both start from a position of negativity; their main argument is that PCBs contribute to the *depletion* of existing levels of pluralism and democracy, rather than the *production* of a particular set of practices, identities and relationships.

While this thesis shows that the proliferation of PCBs has come alongside the erosion of opportunities for electoral participation and the persecution of certain independent civic activity, it focusses on the rhetoric employed by the Kremlin and regional leaders to legitimate the emergence of PBCs and examines the extent to which the practices they inculcate correspond to the Kremlin’s discourse.¹⁶ In other words, it attempts to take PCBs on their own terms by measuring the extent to which they ‘live up to’ the roles assigned to them by their creators. My decision to eschew an approach based solely on theories of democratisation is fuelled by a conviction that attempts to define mechanisms of authoritarian rule against the institutions of liberal democracy lead only to a partial understanding of the rationale for and activities of such mechanisms. Instead, the thesis shows that for a fuller picture, it is necessary to look not only at the relationship between the PCB network and civil society and democracy, but also at the reform of the public sector.

¹⁵ B. Taylor, *State-Building in Putin’s Russia: Policing and Coercion after Communism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 243.

¹⁶ As this chapter sets out in detail below, by discourse I refer to the representations of the social world constructed in language by different social groups. See N. Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), pp. 207-208.

One exception to the studies discussed here is the work of Elena Chebankova, who has employed a Gramscian framework in order to conceptualise public chambers as sites in which the dominant order is generally maintained, but which can also occasionally be used to advance a civic position.¹⁷ The research presented in Chapters Five and Six of this thesis confirms that, in certain circumstances, PCBs do manage to influence state policy and alter the behaviour of authorities. However, it also shows that the 'society against the state' perspective is only one view advanced by PCB members and that in most instances members want to work collaboratively with the authorities.¹⁸

This thesis is empirically, not theoretically, driven. As such, it attempts to understand the emergence of PCBs in terms of their relevance to the production of new social practices and new social relations in Russian public life. In order to do this, it asks the following questions:

- How does the Kremlin explain and legitimate the emergence of PCBs?
- What practices are produced through PCBs and how do they correspond to those articulated by the Putin regime?
- What can the development of PCBs tell us about the kind of bureaucracy emerging in Russia's capitalist but non-democratic state?
- What can the development of PCBs tell us about state-society relations in conditions of authoritarian neoliberalism?

To answer these questions, I begin with a consideration of the domestic political context in which these bodies were founded and the narrative employed by the Kremlin to legitimate them. I find that PCBs were founded as part of the market reform of the Soviet public sector and were legitimated by a narrative that presented an active citizenry as a means to increase Russia's economic competitiveness. This sets them apart from Russia's earlier monitory bodies, created to precipitate the 'withering away of the state' prescribed by Marxist-Leninist theory. I thus situate PCBs in the context of a global 'good governance' agenda, promoted by various intergovernmental organisations to increase levels of public participation in local

¹⁷ E. Chebankova, 'State-sponsored Civic Associations in Russia: Systemic Integration or the "War of Position"?', *East European Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 4, (2012).

¹⁸ For the importance of considering 'civil society' not only as a conflictual but also as a co-operative force see F. Powell, *The Politics of Civil Society: Neoliberalism or Social Left?* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2007); and, in the case of Russia, S. Henderson, 'Civil Society in Russia: State-Society Relations in the Post-Yeltsin Era', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (May/June 2011).

governance in countries around the world. As I discuss in Chapter Two, this norm is considered to facilitate the changing role of the state bureaucracy in conditions of global capitalism from one of direct provider of welfare to citizens to one which steers and oversees the relationship between citizen ‘consumers’ of services and third party service providers. In other words, mechanisms for civic participation in policy-making are by-products of the introduction of market principles into government, since the state has lost the monopoly of information necessary to make effective public policy as a result of processes of outsourcing, privatisation and decentralisation. In this light, then, PCBs become a Russian articulation of global neoliberal governance norms.

An examination of the legislation and state discourse surrounding PCBs shows that their main function is to perform *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*. In Chapters Three to Six, I explore the meanings given to this concept in state documentation and, through a discussion of the interviews I conducted with PCB members, examine the kinds of practices enacted under its banner. I show that the Kremlin has advanced a conception that recalls the monitory activities performed in the name of *narodnyi kontrol'* (people’s oversight/scrutiny) during the later years of the Soviet Union, and expands it to include assistance to the authorities in the carrying out of public services. This contrasts with the conception preferred by some civic groups, who see it instead as a means to hold authorities accountable before the law. While it is, of course, the Kremlin’s conception that has ultimately been enshrined in law, some citizens are nonetheless able to influence state policies from within PCBs if the following three criteria are present: first, if there are a number of confident and critical voices inside a PCB, second, if the topic on which they are campaigning is not perceived to threaten the ‘power vertical’, and, third, if the particular state authority is willing to engage with their recommendations. Thus, the practices that occur inside PCBs do not always correspond to the assumption of unity between citizens and local authorities implicit within the Kremlin’s presentation of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*. Instead, members are sometimes able to exploit the limited pluralism in the policy-making process afforded by PCBs to actively help shape state policy and alter the behaviour of the authorities. This small gap between the discourse advanced by the Kremlin and practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* enacted through PCBs highlights the limits of state control over the policy-making process.

In light of these findings, the central argument of this thesis is that the proliferation of PCBs exemplifies practices of 'authoritarian neoliberal governance', in which the non-democratic state rearticulates global norms of good governance by creating institutional mechanisms that incorporate citizens into policy-making processes but, at the same time, retains substantial amounts of control over the agendas discussed inside them and the kinds of people who may join. 'Authoritarian neoliberal governance' refers to the state-driven actions and processes through which mechanisms of civic engagement that attempt to manage the new role of the market state in public administration in non-democratic regimes are created and coordinated. Since authoritarian neoliberal governance is a process, it is necessarily focussed on institutional change. This change is wrought by the need for neoliberal state bureaucracies to access external input in order to create effective policies, therefore allowing certain levels of participation by non-state 'stake-holders'. At the same time, authoritarian regimes must retain a high level of control to ensure stability and continuity. PCBs are able to provide this input without significantly challenging regime stability. In sum, in contrast to the studies of the Public Chamber discussed above, I present a substantive analysis of the strengths and limitations of civic engagement in Russia's non-democratic regime through a comparison of the discourse and practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* enacted through institutions of authoritarian neoliberal governance. This thesis, therefore, contributes to a greater understanding of, first, the transformations of the Soviet-era bureaucracy to accommodate market principles, second, the institutions created to sustain authoritarian rule in an age of global capitalism and, third, the reconfiguration of the relationship between the state and its citizens produced by these transformations, both as it is envisaged by the Kremlin and as it is operationalised in practice.

Methodology

This study arises from an ethnographic orientation: I sought to embed myself in the community I researched over an extended period of time, while taking notes, asking questions and collecting materials, refining my research question only towards the end of my time in the field.¹⁹ While the amount of direct participant observation I conducted was limited (chiefly during Pilorama Human Rights Festival

¹⁹ M. Hammersley, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 3rd Edition, (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 3-4.

and one meeting of St Petersburg Public Monitoring Commission) and the interviews I conducted were relatively formal, my choice of the object of research resulted from this embeddedness. In this section, I describe three elements of the methodological process. First, I trace the steps I took to settle upon my object of research and demonstrate how my nationality, political leanings and academic status interacted with cultural and political structures in Russia to provide the particular possibilities and constraints that formed the present work. Second, I explain how I sourced the empirical materials and selected my regional case studies. Third, I present the analytical framework, Critical Discourse Analysis.

Selection of Object of Research

My academic interest in this subject was first aroused when I spent three months in the summer of 2009 working with the Research and Information Centre Memorial St Petersburg, (Memorial), during which time I became fascinated by the question of state-society relations in contemporary Russia.²⁰ Six months earlier, masked men armed with police truncheons had raided the premises, and temporarily confiscated all their hard-drives containing 20 years of research into the Stalinist terror and the GULAG. The official reason for the raid was the publication of an anti-Semitic article in the magazine *Novyi Peterburg* – yet Memorial denied all knowledge of both the article and the magazine. Around the same time, the NGO had hosted a public screening of the film, ‘Rebellion: The Litvinenko Case’, which had been banned by the government.²¹ Having moved to St. Petersburg from Berlin, where the project of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past), is public, largely state-driven and undisputed, I was shocked at the Russian state’s willingness to obstruct this kind of work. I wondered whether this difference in behaviour was due to conflictual understandings of basic political concepts as used by Russian state and societal actors. My initial research project thus proposed to compare the meanings of ‘democracy’ and ‘civil society’ used by regime-critical Russian NGOs, the Russian state and European intergovernmental organisations.

Beginning in September 2011, I spent a semester at the European University at St Petersburg (EUSPB), during which time I attended numerous seminars,

²⁰ See Nauchno-informatsionnyi tsentr Memorial, <http://memorial-nic.org/>, (accessed 20 January 2014).

²¹ See ‘Russia: Raid on Memorial HQ’, *openDemocracy Russia*, 5 December 2008, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/email/russia-raid-on-memorial-hq> (accessed 11 November 2011).

conferences and presentations by Russian scholars and became familiar with their work on state-society relations, much of which was focussed on the 'effectiveness' of PCBs.²² Perturbed by a private comment on my project by one of the University's senior staff, who stated that the popular Western focus on oppositional or Western-funded NGOs is irrelevant to Russian politics and uninteresting to Russian academics, I began to discuss the topic of PCBs with my friends and colleagues in Memorial, EUSPB and elsewhere.²³ These discussions indicated to me that these institutions may be more indicative of the relationship between state and society in Russia than the periodic persecution by the state of oppositional NGOs, some of whose members also belonged to PCBs. During this time, I also witnessed the citizens' movement to monitor the parliamentary and Presidential elections and the mass anti-Putin demonstrations that followed.

Once back at my desk in Exeter, I returned to the English-language literature on state-society relations in Russia, and realized that there were precisely no studies that focussed on the PCB network.²⁴ As reviewed in the previous section, although several works discuss the Federal Public Chamber in detail and some studies mention federal public councils in passing, there has not hitherto been a systematic analysis of the emergence of these bodies as part of a single network.²⁵ I thus decided to change my focus to concentrate on this question.

²² See Gorny, 'Obshchestvennyye konsul'tativnyye struktury pri orgakh vlasti'; A. Tarasenko, D. Dubrovskii and A. Starodubtsev, *Navesiti mosty mezhdru obshchestvom i gosudarstvom* (St Petersburg, Tsentr nezavisimyykh sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniy, 2011); L. Petrova, and A. Sungurov, 'Instituty-posredniki mezhdru organami vlasti i obshchestvom: sluchai Sankt-Peterburga', *Voprosy gosudarstvennogo i munitsipal'nogo upravleniya*, 2012, No. 2; I. Chetverikova, 'Institutsionalizatsiya obshchestvennogo kontrolya soblyudeniya prav cheloveka v mestakh prinuditel'nogo soderzhaniya (v ramkakh nabiudatel'nykh komissii)', Master's Thesis, European University at St Petersburg, 2011; A. Sungurov, O. Zakharova, L. Petrova, and N. Raspopov, 'Instituty mediatory i ikh razvitiye v sovremennoi Rossii: obshchestvennyye palaty i konsul'tativnyye sovery: federal'nyi i regional'nyi opyt', *Politicheskiye issledovaniya: POLIS*, 2012, No. 1.

²³ S. Henderson, 'Selling Civil Society: Western Aid and the Non-Governmental Organization Sector in Russia', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2, (March 2002); J. Hemment, 'The Riddle of the Third Sector: Civil Society, International Aid and NGOs in Russia', *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 77, No. 2, (Spring 2004); A. Evans, L. Henry, and L. Sundstrom, (eds.), *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2006); L. Sundstrom, *Funding Civil Society: Foreign Assistance and NGO Development in Russia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006); Human Rights Watch, *An Uncivil Approach to Civil Society: Continuing State Curbs on Independent NGOs and Activists in Russia* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2009).

²⁴ For an in-depth discussion of this literature, please refer to Chapter Two of this thesis.

²⁵ See, for instance, G. Hahn, 'Medvedev, Putin and Perestroika 2.0', *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 18, No. 3, (2010); Taylor, *State-Building in Putin's Russia*, pp. 241-244; O. Semukhina and K. Reynolds, *Understanding the Modern Russian Police* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2013), pp. 209.

In the summer of 2012, I undertook a three-month research trip, based at an activist community in St. Petersburg, in which I met and befriended a large number of artists, activists, anti-fascists, journalists and philosophers, many of whom introduced me to colleagues, invited me to seminars and exhibitions, helped me with places to stay in other cities and passed me relevant materials for my work. During this time, I conducted the bulk of my interviews with current and former PCB members in three case-study cities of Moscow, St Petersburg and Samara (the rationale for which is discussed in the following subsection), and attended the Perm'-based human rights festival, Pilorama, where the concept of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* was also a hot topic.²⁶ I began the interview process by making attempts to speak to members of the Federal Public Chamber and federal-level public councils, but with very limited success (I only managed to conduct an interview with one member of the Federal Public Chamber). Quickly changing tactic, I decided to interview anyone who belonged to a PCB, in the hope that the process of 'snowballing' (that is, asking respondents at the end of the interview to provide contact details for other relevant individuals) would lead me to more targeted participants. It was during this process that I understood the extent to which these institutions were proliferating at regional and municipal levels. This confirmed the importance of including regional case studies in my research design (fortunately, I had considerably more success with regional PCB members than their federal-level counterparts) and led to the question of how far federal-level policy was reproduced in the regions.

In November 2012, I returned to Russia for two weeks to conduct further interviews. However, my trip was marred by an unfortunate incident in Samara, where I was arrested on suspicion of putting up posters in protest of a neo-Nazi march. Although I was released without charge after an over-night stay in the cells, I have not since returned to Russia out of fear of being denied entry. Although I am confident that the empirical research I have undertaken is sufficient to demonstrate the relationship between the Kremlin's discourse of civic engagement and the practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* in regional PCBs, there are certain individuals I would have liked to interview but have consequently been unable to.

²⁶ See Pilorama 2012, <http://www.pilorama.perm36.ru/pilorama-2012001.html>, (accessed 20 January 2014).

In sum, although this thesis is informed by a broadly inductivist logic, it is tempered by an awareness of the limits to this logic posed by my positionality.²⁷ In other words, while I have sought to explore my research object in the field before returning to my desk to elaborate a framework that best interprets the data collected, I recognise that both these steps have been shaped and limited by my background and beliefs as a left-leaning, British PhD student. This identity provided both opportunities and setbacks: on the one hand, my friends in Memorial St Petersburg called their Moscow colleagues on my behalf and helped me to arrange meetings with some of Russia's most senior activists; on the other hand, my 'foreign-ness' was undoubtedly a factor in the refusal by federal-level PCB members and some more orthodox regional PCB members in the regions to participate in my research. As a result, there is a slight regime-critical bias in the views expressed by my respondents in Chapters Five and Six. However, I do not consider it to impede the overall picture presented in this thesis. I have used my interviews for two main purposes: first, to acquire information about the foundation, proliferation and operations of PCBs, thus filling in gaps in the information available online and, second, as a means to build a picture of the practices that occur inside PCBs. I therefore mainly asked them factual questions about PCBs' activities, the process and outcomes of meetings, and the relations among PCB members. Indeed, regime critical individuals may be more likely to give a more honest picture of PCB practices, since they have no desire to whitewash the regime. I now turn to a more detailed elaboration of the processes I undertook to collect the empirical materials used in this thesis.

Selecting and Collecting Empirical Materials

In order to build a picture both of state discourse of civic engagement and of the practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* conducted in PCBs, two types of empirical materials were necessary. First, I accessed key speeches and articles by the Russian President in order to explore the federal-level discourse. These are the annual Presidential Addresses to the Federal Assembly and Vladimir Putin's seven pre-election articles outlining his domestic and foreign policy agendas in the run up to the March 2012 Presidential elections. The Presidential Address has been made

²⁷ D. Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, (Autumn, 1988).

every year since the adoption of the 1993 Constitution and is considered to deal with the 'state of the nation'; the pre-election articles were published in some of the country's most respected broadsheets and were discussed extensively both in Russia and beyond. In both cases, I examine how the President constructs processes of change, how he describes the role of the citizen in governance and the institutions he envisages to inculcate this new role, and what narrative he uses to legitimate the new institutions and the new relationship between citizens and the authorities. These are examined in Chapter Three. I then compared the federal discourse with that of three regional leaders in Moscow, St Petersburg and Samara in order to assess the extent to which the Kremlin's discourse is rearticulated at the regional level. I therefore selected interviews conducted by journalists with each leader, archived on the regional government administration website. Again, these materials allowed me to gain an understanding of each individual's vision for the role of the citizen in governance, the types of mechanisms they considered would operationalise this role and how they legitimised this vision. As discussed in Chapters Five and Six, the PCB network was presented as one of the central means to enhance civic participation in all three cases, and an active, united citizenry was presented as the only way in which to achieve prosperity in nearly all cases.

In order to understand the practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* produced by PCBs, I conducted 36 semi-structured interviews: 15 in Moscow, 11 in St Petersburg and 10 in Samara. As mentioned in the previous section, the networks I built up through my time with Memorial gave me a significant advantage in contacting and securing interviews. I also scoured the websites of relevant PCBs, many of whom provided e-mail addresses or telephone numbers for their members, and employed the strategy of 'snowballing'. As St Petersburg was the city I knew best, it made sense to make it my first case study, but it also allowed for an insight into civic participation in the governance of Russia's 'window on the West'.²⁸ However, I was also interested to see how city-level PCBs operated in the country's capital, as federal and regional government structures exist side by side and the city possesses the highest number of politically active people. Indeed, given that the discourse of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* is promulgated from the political centre, it would be pertinent to examine the extent to which this discourse is received and rearticulated

²⁸ I. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 11.

by local administration in the centre too, compared to that of other more geographically distant regions. Of course, St Petersburg and Moscow are administrative anomalies since they are Russia's only two federal cities, that is, cities that have the status of a federal subject, such as an oblast or republic. Nonetheless, I believe that the choice of two federal cities is justified given the political significance of both cities as shapers of national socio-political trends in Russia.

My decision to focus on St Petersburg and Moscow as two case studies necessitated a third case study city that would give a perspective from the regions. I eventually settled on Samara given that it is a large regional metropolis (the sixth largest in Russia) and administrative centre of Samara Oblast, meaning that there would most probably be a plethora of PCBs (an assumption which turned out to be correct). However, Samara also provides an interesting point of contrast to Moscow and St Petersburg: it is considerably less affluent. Its high levels of industry meant that the 2008 financial crisis disproportionately affected the region: the average income in Samara Oblast is 2,500 roubles lower than the national average,²⁹ and the Oblast went from contributing to the national budget to being a subsidized Oblast, a fact that also indicates poor levels of governance in the region.³⁰ There were, of course, numerous other cities that could have made interesting comparisons but Samara was also an obvious choice for practical reasons: a friend of mine who worked for Memorial Samara had offered me a place to stay and help with arranging interviews. Ideally, I would have liked to extend my study to other Russian regions, comparing regional local regimes of governance for greater civic participation, but a larger project would have been beyond the scope of a PhD. Instead, this is certainly a topic for a future research project.

I chose to interview individuals with three types of relationship to PCBs: i) present and former PCB members; ii), individuals who are not members themselves but who work closely with PCBs; and, iii), activists who disagree with such institutions on principle. Bearing in mind that one individual can occupy positions in several PCBs simultaneously, I interviewed eight current and former members of the Presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights,

²⁹ 'Zarplaty v Samare odin iz samykh nizkikh sredi gorodov-millionnikov', Samru.ru, 16 January 2013, http://www.samru.ru/society/novosti_samara/67002.html (accessed 22 August 2014).

³⁰ 'Ekspertam ne ponravilas' Samarskaya Oblast', *RBK*, 15 October 2010, <http://top.rbc.ru/politics/15/10/2010/482424.shtml> (accessed 21 August 2014).

five members of the Human Rights Ombudsman Expert Council, one member of the Federal Public Chamber, two activists who had had on-going dealings with the Public Chamber but were not members themselves, four regional public chamber members, nine current or former members of regional and municipal public councils, five regional activists who had never been PCB members but who had repeated dealings with them, the Samara human rights ombudsman, a member of the St Petersburg human rights ombudsman bureau, a former federal human rights ombudsman, six PMC members and a further four individuals who had either helped draft the PMC law or co-ordinated NGOs that worked alongside PMCs.³¹ Most of these individuals were also members of NGOs.

My respondents were highly educated, senior people, used to speaking publically on political issues. Most were familiar with research interviews with several informing me that they frequently give interviews to Western journalists and scholars. This meant that the process of interviewing was itself relatively easy, despite my, at times, faltering Russian. At the beginning of each interview, respondents read and signed a Russian-language consent form, which included the opportunity to request anonymity and receive a transcript of the interview for potential editing by the respondent, as well as a copy of the dissertation once completed. However, most respondents chose not to request anonymity – indeed one even lamented the fact that his comments could not be made public! Despite this, because of the ethical imperative to guard against harm wherever possible, I have chosen to anonymise all transcripts.

The interviews themselves were semi-structured, that is, although I prepared a list of questions I allowed the interview to take a conversational format, frequently abandoning the list. In general, I sought to find out why they had joined a particular PCB (or, indeed, why they had left it), what activities were undertaken by the institution, how the respondents related to their colleagues, how the PCB related to the authorities, why they thought the PCB was founded, how they thought it could be improved and what role they saw PCBs as playing in the relationship between society at the state. The interviews were recorded with a Dictaphone and, due to the length of time this would have taken me, were transcribed by personal acquaintances in St Petersburg. I e-mailed the transcripts to my respondents,

³¹ The interviews are decoded, with information about the organisation the interviewee belonged to, the place and date of interview, at the end of the bibliography.

asking for their confirmation that the entire transcript may be used, but received only one or two replies (both of which were affirmative). I thus assumed consent from the rest of my respondents.

Selection of analytical framework

I spent a long time searching for an appropriate analytical framework, one that would enable a simultaneous consideration of linguistic meanings and the practices that are attached to them. Given that my initial project placed the meanings of the concepts 'democracy' and 'civil society' at the centre of analysis, I first looked at *Begriffsgeschichte* (conceptual history). This is an approach developed in Germany by historians Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck, who compiled a seven-volume dictionary of the histories of 130 political and social concepts as they were used during the German Enlightenment. For conceptual historians, conceptual change interacts symbiotically with social change, the one both registering and affecting the other; it recognises that the meanings of concepts are embedded within social life and are therefore constantly evolving.³² Melvin Richter, an American scholar who has sought to bring the German tradition to the Anglo-American world, summarises the two principal methods used by conceptual historians: first, 'the application of a number of linguistic techniques to the analysis of concepts historically and [second] relating changes in their meaning to structural political, social, economic transformations.'³³ This approach would have allowed me to chart the transformations in the meanings of basic political concepts from the Soviet period to the present day, showing the extent to which meanings were affected by the collapse of the USSR. However, when my project changed direction, the applicability of *Begriffsgeschichte* diminished since it aims to draw connections between linguistic and social change over the *longue durée* and is therefore principally a method for diachronic analyses.³⁴ Although the roots of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* can be found in the revolutionary concept of *rabochyi kontrol'* (workers' oversight), which I discuss in Chapter Three, the first PCB was

³² R. Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 23.

³³ M. Richter, 'Conceptual History (*Begriffsgeschichte*) and Political Theory', *Political Theory*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (November, 1986).

³⁴ R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 82-83.

founded only in 2005. I am therefore primarily interested in exploring the discourse and practices of contemporary governance.

Secondly, I examined the work of Michael Freeden, for whom meanings are deducible through a morphological analysis, which views concepts as embedded within the broader structure of a particular political ideology, and examines the composite particles of each concept and their relative positioning within the ideological structure.³⁵ For Freeden, the meaning of a concept is located both inside the concept, that is, in the ensemble of smaller components which constitute it, as well as outside the concept, that is, in its relative position to other concepts in the broader structure of the ideology. In explaining how ideologies are distinguished from one another, Freeden writes that we must look to 'the relative ordering in which they deploy similar concepts, on which depend both the precise decontesting of the concepts and the overall interpretation of any ideology's messages.'³⁶ However, again, when I switched my focus from the concepts of democracy and civil society to the development of PCBs, the necessity of placing the concept at the centre of analysis became less salient; instead, I required a methodology that would give equal weight to discourse and to actions. I therefore finally decided to employ Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, which places 'social practices' at the centre of analysis and dialectically links them to discourse. I now elaborate this approach and its fit with my object of research.

As the name suggests, Critical Discourse Analysis (hereafter CDA) focusses predominantly on language. However, it also views linguistic change and social change as mutually constitutive. In order to uncover processes of change, CDA entails a dual methodological focus: first, on 'discourse', understood to comprise the linguistic elements of the social world and, second, on the relationship between these elements and other elements of the social world, such as institutions and social practices, understood as 'relatively stabilised form[s] of social activity'.³⁷ In the words of Fairclough, it is an 'analysis of dialectical *relations between* discourse and other objects, elements or moments, as well as an analysis of the 'internal relations' of discourse.'³⁸ It thus throws up questions that explore the extent to which the actions of individuals and institutions reproduce, contest or modulate the

³⁵ M. Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

³⁶ Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, pp. 83.

³⁷ Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, pp. 205.

³⁸ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 4.

discourse. Discourse in CDA has two meanings: first – as in the case of the present paragraph – it is understood as the broadly semiotic aspects of social practice (hence, Fairclough prefers the term ‘semiosis’ in this context); second, discourse is understood as representational meaning in texts.³⁹ In other words, this second meaning refers to the different construals in language of elements of the social world by different actors or groups. For instance, the way in which the Putin government imagines civic engagement in governance differs from both the way certain civic groups imagine it and the way in which the UN imagines it. These three constructions or ‘vision[s]’⁴⁰ of civic engagement in governance, articulated for example in legislation, campaign materials or declarations, can be termed different discourses of civic engagement in governance. In the rest of this thesis, I employ the second meaning of this word.

Critical discourse analysts understand the social world to be composed of three cognate elements: social structures, social practices and social events, with social practices constituting the primary object of research. Norman Fairclough defines a ‘social structure’ as an ‘abstract’ entity ‘defining a potential, a set of possibilities’, and cites social class or the economic system as examples.⁴¹ Social events refer to occurrences in the everyday world, the majority of which are constituted in part (but not exclusively, of course) in language, for instance, through meetings, conversations, newspaper articles, reports, TV shows and so on. He states that social practices mediate between social structures and social events, and are to be conceived of as ‘ways of controlling the selection of certain structural possibilities and the exclusion of others, and the retention of these selections over time, in particular areas of social life.’⁴² Teaching can be seen as one such social practice. Social practices mutate over time as they become networked with other social practices: Fairclough cites the marketization of higher education as a combination of practices of teaching and practices of management.⁴³ CDA sees language (or semiosis) as an integral part of all social practices, but one that is not reducible to them, since they also contain non-semiotic elements such as physical,

³⁹ For a disambiguation of ‘discourse’ in CDA see Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 4.

⁴⁰ N. Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 21.

⁴¹ N. Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), pp. 23.

⁴² Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, pp. 23-24.

⁴³ Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, pp. 24.

sociological and psychological elements.⁴⁴ As such, Fairclough suggests undertaking CDA in conjunction with other methodologies such as ethnography or institutional analysis; indeed, this is what I have done.⁴⁵ In this thesis, the social event I am concerned with is the emergence and proliferation of PCBs in contemporary Russia; the social practice I am examining is the practice of civic engagement in governance; the social structure this relates to is the structure of state-society relations in contemporary Russia.

Fairclough distinguishes three analytically separable lenses through which to access meaning in language: genres, discourses and styles.⁴⁶ The first refers to what language is doing as part of social relations (for instance, *informing* the authorities about the conditions in prisons, *advising* them on ways for improvement and *warning* them of the consequences of inaction.) The second, discourse, as discussed above, corresponds to what is being represented or talked about in the text (for instance, the role of prison inspectors in monitoring prisons). The third refers to a value judgement or a commitment to a particular stance that can be seen as part of the construction of an identity (for instance that of a human rights activist). To relate these to the semiotic aspects of texts discussed above, meanings in genres are likely to be actional meanings, meanings in discourse are representational meanings, and meanings in style are identificational. The analysis presented in this thesis focusses on the second of these: it explores the representational meanings produced as discourses of civic engagement in governance by different groups of social actors in Russia. In other words, it examines the different constructions of civic engagement in governance in language.

The relationship between discourse and social practices can also be termed the relationship between rhetoric and reality, or the relationship between discourse and action.⁴⁷ An exploration of this relationship necessarily entails a level of critique insofar as it examines the gaps between what the discourse claims to do and what it actually does.⁴⁸ These gaps are explored by building pictures of the discourse and the practices and comparing how far the latter corresponds to the former. Fairclough argues that this gap provides the starting point for 'political contestation and

⁴⁴ Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language?*, pp. 145.

⁴⁵ Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, pp. 2.

⁴⁶ See Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, pp. 27.

⁴⁷ Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language?*, pp. 144.

⁴⁸ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 7.

resistance' since leaders may be held to account for the promises they made that have not materialised. However, the gap between discourse and action I expose in this thesis tells us less about the space for resistance to the practices inculcated by PCBs and more about how far their practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* correspond to the vision (discourse) advocated by the Russian government. This gap is important for two reasons. First, it defines the parameters of possibility for citizens to shape policy outcomes in Russia by suggesting that PCBs are not necessarily the consensual, regime-friendly bodies envisaged by the Kremlin and that, despite the Kremlin's discourse, PCBs can enable citizens to provide input into public life in their area. Second, it indicates that the presence of limited pluralism in public policy-making means that complete control by the regime over policy outcomes is impossible.

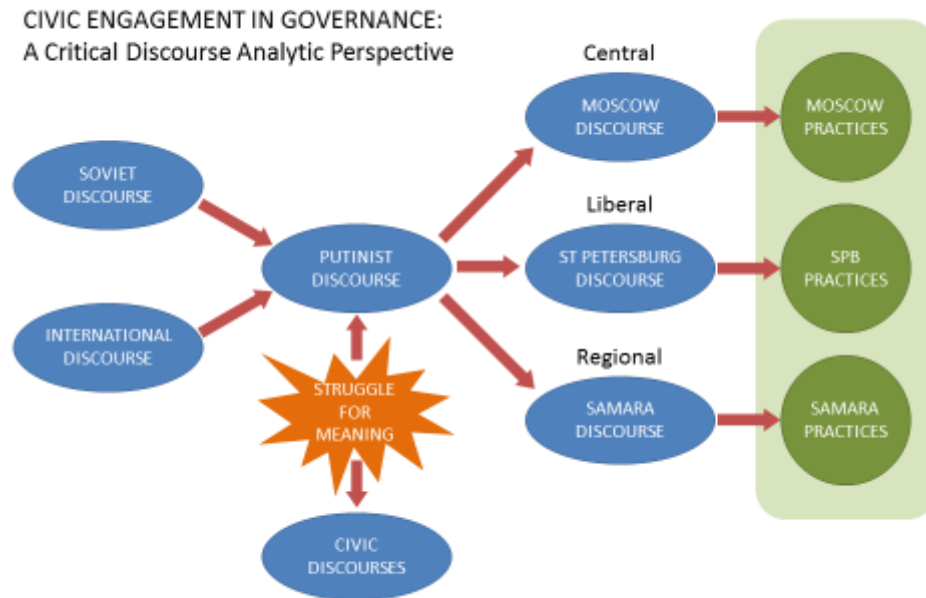
Fairclough also distinguishes four frames through which to analyse different aspects of discourse as representational meaning.⁴⁹ The first of these concerns the *emergence* and *constitution* of discourses. He argues that new discourses are composed of elements of other, prior discourses and that to understand how and why an actor represents a particular set of practices in a particular way, it is necessary to explore the roots of contemporary formulations.⁵⁰ The second frame concerns the 'relations of contestation between discourses' and the emerging *hegemony* of a particular discourse.⁵¹ The task here is to explore different representations advanced by different social groups and the process in which one achieves and maintains dominance. The third frame concerns the dissemination of the discourses across structures (such as governments and public services) and scales (international, national, local) through a process of *recontextualisation*, and entails an examination of the extent to which meanings are simply rearticulated in the new context or are adapted for local audiences. The fourth concerns the shift from discourse as a political imaginary to having real, transformative effects in the social world; it refers to the ways in which the discourse is put into practice, how it is *operationalised*. I have used these four frames to structure the analysis of the empirical materials in this thesis. Chapter Three explores the emergence and constitution of the Kremlin's discourse of civic engagement in governance; Chapter Four deals with the challenges this discourse has received from civic groups and

⁴⁹ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 508.

⁵⁰ Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, pp. 127.

⁵¹ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 508.

the ways in which it has neutralised these challenges; Chapters Five and Six examine how far the federal-level discourse has been reproduced by regional leaders and the kind of practices inculcated by this discourse in Moscow, St Petersburg and Samara. The below diagram is a visualisation of this structure.



A final note on neoliberalism and language. Scholars have also pointed to the importance of language and discourse in the diffusion of neoliberal norms. Norman Fairclough has argued that a central component of neoliberal practices is a discursive one. He argues that since these processes have been conducted according to an ‘explicit pre-constructed doctrine’, language has been instrumental in promoting and manifesting neoliberal practices.⁵² Jamie Peck, too, has highlighted the role that think tanks and other discourse-producing bodies have played in the promotion of the neoliberal agenda.⁵³ This ‘pre-constructed doctrine’ is then received and re-articulated by a host of diverse actors around the world, and is manifested in particular social practices at various levels of socio-political organisation. This thesis aims to investigate an aspect of the way in which the Russian state is articulating global neoliberal trends relating to the changing nature of the state, which are most commonly captured in the epithet, ‘from government to

⁵² Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp.12.

⁵³ J. Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 138.

governance', that is, the emergence and proliferations of mechanisms which allow citizen and non-state participation in policy-making processes.⁵⁴

To conclude this section, CDA is appropriate for my object of study for three reasons. First, it posits a mutually constitutive relationship between discourse and social practices in that each 'internalises', but is not reducible to, the other.⁵⁵ This conceptualisation reflects the way in which the activities of the PCB network and the Kremlin's promotion of the discourse of civic engagement in governance both support and propel one another, despite being separate processes. Second, given that my empirical materials are textual – the promotion of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* occurs in speeches, newspaper articles and government reports and my research interviews are also text-based – a language-oriented approach seemed most fitting. Third, Fairclough employs CDA to analyse various aspects of neoliberalism, including neoliberal restructuring in post-communist countries, with researchers highlighting the importance of discourse in driving processes of 'transition'⁵⁶ in Central and Eastern Europe.⁵⁷ Ultimately, however, the choice of CDA was empirically driven: it is a theoretical framework that helps me to interpret my data in the context of the shifting relationship between the state and non-state groups after the collapse of communism. As such, throughout the thesis, while I utilise the terms articulated by Fairclough, I employ CDA as a general guide rather than a strict set of rules.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One places the development of PCBs in the context of 150 years of civic participation in governance and shows that limited pluralism has been a feature of governance in Russia since the mid-Nineteenth Century. Beginning with the *zemstvo* movement in 1864, the chapter then considers the opportunities for civic participation during the Soviet Union before sketching a history of PCBs and other forms of engagement in the post-Soviet era. While the chapter highlights the

⁵⁴ See R. Rhodes, 'Chapter Three: Waves of Governance' in D. Levi-Faur, (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 33.

⁵⁵ Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, pp. 205.

⁵⁶ I have put this word in quotation marks in order to emphasise the contested nature of the so-called 'transition paradigm.' While I am sceptical of the teleological and neo-imperialist implications in the idea of transitioning *to* democracy, discussed in detail in Chapter Two, there can be little doubt that former Soviet states are transitioning *from* state socialism. I therefore use the concept here to indicate the reshaping of the Soviet-era state.

⁵⁷ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 505.

importance of historical trends in civic participation in governance for the institutional development of PCBs, it also shows that contemporary mechanisms have been created as part of a set of market reforms of the public sector. It therefore argues that PCBs are a qualitatively new phenomenon. In other words, although the concept of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, central to their codification in law, makes a specific link to the monitory bodies of the Krushchev era, the neoliberal imperatives of outsourcing, privatisation and decentralisation that guide post-Soviet public sector reform have required the creation of bodies that allow the state to harness civic activity in the performance of tasks it is no longer able to do. Contemporary PCBs thus do not merely enact oversight of government activity but are also often expected to assist the authorities in the provision of public services. Thus, while a historical assessment of antecedent consultative structures are important, it alone cannot account for the development of PCBs because they are, as shown in this chapter, a product of the marketization of the state.

Having described in detail the object of study, Chapter Two then sets out the theoretical lens through which I interpret it: 'authoritarian neoliberal governance.' I argue that this concept allows for an understanding of how global norms relating to the opening up of the state to include non-state voices in the process of policy formation have interacted with the governing practices of the authoritarian state to produce institutions that simultaneously enable and constrain civic participation in governance. In this light, PCBs are seen as a mechanism through which non-democratic states can receive the necessary information to make public policy as processes of outsourcing, privatisation and decentralisation of the state administration have reduced its capacity to do so without external input.

Employing the four lenses on representational meaning discussed above, Chapters Three to Six interpret the empirical materials using a Critical Discourse Analytic Perspective in order to explore the gap between the discourse of civic engagement in governance articulated by Russian leaders and the actions (or practices) produced through PCBs. As discussed above, this gap reveals how far PCBs in fact perform the activities intended for them – do they merely assist the state or do they help set its agenda? – and ultimately constitutes the limits to state control over PCB practices. With this in mind, Chapter Three traces the emergence and constitution of the contemporary discourse of civic engagement in governance. It demonstrates that the new Putinist discourse is made up of a combination of

elements drawn from Soviet-era discourses of citizen engagement and international discourses of 'good governance'. First, the chapter shows that the roots of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* lie in Leninist conceptions of *rabochyi kontrol'* and post-Stalinist discourses of *narodnyi kontrol'*, not only because the terms themselves are similar, graduating from *workers'* to *people's* to *public* scrutiny, but also because they each conceptualise the role of the citizen to be one of monitoring the state's activities. The authorities make decisions; the citizens must either ensure that they are properly implemented or implement them themselves. Second, it examines the global neoliberal discourses of economic competitiveness and domestic restructuring advanced by the UN, international financial institutions and regional intergovernmental bodies and shows that civic participation in governance is considered part of a broader 'good governance' agenda alongside processes of decentralisation, privatisation, tackling corruption and increasing public-private partnerships, as a central means to increase economic competitiveness. Third, it explores Putin's discourse of civic engagement in governance, and demonstrates that his conception of a relationship between the citizen and the authorities that is reminiscent of the Soviet era, in which the former is active but obedient, is legitimated by a narrative that stresses the importance of Russia succeeding in the 'global economic race'.

Having established the general discourse of civic engagement in governance as articulated by the President, Chapter Four explores two examples of the contestation of this discourse by citizens' groups that has occurred as the Kremlin's discourse has consolidated. It considers attempts by experienced prisoners' rights campaigners to enshrine a more confrontational understanding of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* into the legal codex with the foundation of Public Monitoring Commissions and by everyday citizens who founded institutions that monitored the 2011 and 2012 elections. It demonstrates that the civic conception of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* advanced by these groups resembles a form of contentious politics, in which transgressing authorities are held accountable before the law. However, it also shows how the Kremlin has systematically co-opted these grassroots movements into the growing network of authoritarian neoliberal governance by writing its version of the concept into law. The chapter argues that, despite on-going challenges 'from below', *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* understood as a means of assisting the authorities

– and thus virtually identical to *rabochyi* and *narodnyi kontrol'* – remains a central part of the hegemonic discourse.

Chapters Five and Six consider the lenses of recontextualisation and operationalization in, first, the country's federal centre (Moscow and St Petersburg) and, second, in a regional case study (Samara). In other words, they explore the extent to which the hegemonic federal level discourse has been rearticulated by regional leaders and examine the kinds of practices inculcated by local PBCs, that is, the gap between discourse and action. In Chapter Five, I show that federal level discourse is reproduced relatively effectively in Moscow, but less so in St Petersburg. This is due to the very different attitude towards citizen participation held by Moscow's Mayor and St Petersburg's Governor, the former actively promoting innovative mechanisms that support the Kremlin's vision of state-society relations and the latter almost completely neglecting to engage with the public. As a result, PCB respondents in Moscow were generally more optimistic about the possibilities for helping to shape local policy than their St Petersburg counterparts. However, in neither city did respondents report practices of assisting the state in the completion of its tasks. Instead, they tried where possible to use PCBs as a means to lobby the interests of their organisations and to represent a 'civic position' on key issues before the authorities in the hope of influencing policy outcomes (and thus recalled the civic understanding of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* discussed in Chapter Four). In some limited cases, these activities were successful. In Chapter Six, I show that, of all three leaders, the Samara Governor most faithfully presents himself as Putin's hand-picked envoy to the region and ardently advocates the expansion of the PCB network. Concomitantly, Samara respondents were the most enthusiastic about PCBs, with more people describing practices of assistance and oversight as their main tasks. Thus, in Samara, the gap between discourse and action was smallest, and was understood to be because there are fewer people willing or able to advance a 'civic position' vis-à-vis the authorities in the region.

While the local regimes in each region differed substantially, the analysis in these two chapters shows that PCBs in the three case studies do enable members to influence state policy in certain policy areas, Samara included, with Moscow PCBs unsurprisingly demonstrating the greatest amount of leverage. PBCs, therefore, only partially fulfil the functions for which they were intended: instead of always merely assisting government figures and departments in the execution of

tasks defined behind closed doors, they can occasionally help to set the local agenda and produce policy change. However, it also shows that the bodies remain highly dependent on the state and are only able to influence a policy already of interest to local authorities. This, I argue, is the essence of authoritarian neoliberal governance.

Chapter One:

Limited Pluralism in Russian Governance 1864-2014

It has been noted that, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, postcommunist countries faced a 'triple transition' of marketization, democratisation and state building.¹ While the concept of 'transition' is problematic (and is critiqued in the following chapter), the idea of a 'triple transition' is useful insofar as it highlights the different institutional areas that required reform: transforming a central command economy into a market economy, turning a one-party state into a multiparty state with competitive elections and changing the communist administrative system managed by the *nomenklatura* to one based on democratic and market-oriented principles. Clearly, these three areas have been transformed to different degrees and configurations, but most political and academic interest has been concentrated on the first two. The focus of this thesis is on the third area: the transformation of the old bureaucracy into a more 'neoliberal' public sector with streamlined departments that outsources certain state functions, includes multiple voices and stakeholders and re-configures the citizen as a consumer of public services. This chapter has two purposes. First, it places the emergence of the post-Soviet public sector in historical context in order to reveal dyachronic factors that condition and shape the possibilities for contemporary institutional design. In order to do this, it discusses the *zemstvo* movement in late Tsarist Russia and the various opportunities for public participation in governance during the Soviet Union. Second, it gives a thick description of the process of foundation of PCBs (something which has not yet been done in existing studies of public sector reform in Russia) in order to give the reader a detailed picture of the object of study.

Zemstvos were local government institutions founded after the emancipation of the serfs in 1864. Their elected members were responsible for conducting taxation, providing welfare services and maintaining infrastructure in their provinces. These activities led to the formation of a critical attitude towards Tsarist policies in many members and *zemstvos* often became hotbeds of liberal and reformist ideas. Their growing influence at both local and national levels significantly contributed to

¹ C. Offe, 'Capitalism by Democratic Design? Democratic Theory Facing the Triple Transition in East Central Europe', *Social Research*, Vol. 71, No. 3, (Fall 2004).

the destabilisation of the Old Regime. In the wake of the Bolshevik revolution, the *zemstvo* network was dissolved and the idea of civic participation in governance lay dormant until after Stalin's death. However, his successor Nikita Khrushchev, as part of the dual processes of 'de-Stalinization' and the graduation to 'developed socialism', reformed and revitalized existing participatory mechanisms and founded new institutions through which interest groups could petition the government and monitor its activities. These were, first, the attempts to conduct direct democracy through the system of soviets; second, monitory groups that enacted *narodnyi kontrol'* (people's scrutiny/oversight) of the execution of government directives; third, trade unions, through which members could petition employers for improved working conditions and help shape economic and labour policy; and fourth, state sanctioned public associations such as women's groups and veterans' organisations that lobbied the state for benefits on behalf of their interest group.²

In the post-Soviet era, particularly during the 2000s, new institutions have been founded which allow citizens to participate in the various stages of governance, including the formation of public policy, assisting in and monitoring its delivery and evaluating the quality of the public services consumed. However, the focus is on the extensive development of PCBs, since this constitutes the main means through which citizens can influence policy-making and is the major state-driven operationalization of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*. Promoted as a means for citizens simultaneously to monitor and assist local authorities through the practice of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, their design enables the authorities to conduct a certain level of co-operation with 'civil society' and the public, while retaining a substantial amount of control over both the membership and the activities of these bodies. PCBs thus combine the spirit of regional governance born during the *zemstvo* era, the blend of assistance and scrutiny developed during the Soviet period and the institutional dependence the state evident in participatory mechanisms throughout Russian history. The main difference is, of course, that PCBs are intended to respond to administrative issues arising from the creation of a market-based, rather than an absolutist or a Communist, public sector.

The chapter is split into three parts. The first part discusses the history of the *zemstvo* movement and assesses its impact on the formation of state policy; the

² The most important of these for this thesis are the monitory bodies (as Putin's discourse draws heavily on the ideas and the vocabulary of this movement) and are discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

second part explores governance mechanisms in the Soviet Union; and the third part gives a history of public sector reform after the Soviet Union's collapse, and analyses the development of PCBs within that context. The chapter shows, on the one hand, that PCBs are a qualitatively new phenomenon that have emerged as a response to the marketization of the Soviet-era public sector. On the other hand, it shows that there is a substantial amount of continuity, namely the ongoing presence of limited pluralism (albeit in varying degrees) in the development and execution of public policy. In other words, the structures in all three regimes introduced some dissenting voices into the tightly controlled area of state policy formation. Sometimes involvement in these structures inculcated a critical attitude towards the authorities and fuelled desires for greater participation. However, in all three regimes, while citizens were able to participate in activities relating to public administration, the opportunities for them to determine political power were either outright denied or severely controlled. I show below that the expansion of civic participation in Tsarist and in Communist Russia is considered one of the major causes of the collapse of both regimes. Of course, whether this will also be the case in Putin's Russia remains to be seen.

Zemstvos in Late Imperial Russia

The Russian Imperial polity at the turn of the Nineteenth Century has been described as a 'state without a society,' an epithet intended to highlight the almost total lack of civic initiatives existing independently of the state bureaucracy.³ Furthermore, the dependent mentality produced by serfdom which, as explained by Victor Leontovitsch, 'deadened the capacity for self-discipline' and prevented the formation of active citizens who could involve themselves in their own self-governance.⁴ The *zemstvos* have been viewed as a forum, which 'permitted the development of a public identity as a result of the civic initiative, independence and enterprise shown by the delegates.'⁵ But when these bodies were set up, they were already operating in environments that had had some limited experience of welfare

³ J. Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia: Political and Social Institutions under the Last Three Czars* (Westport: Praeger, 1962), pp. 17.

⁴ V. Leontovitsch, *The History of Liberalism in Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), pp. 113.

⁵ T. Porter and S. Seregny, 'The Zemstvo Reconsidered' in V. Gel'man and A. Evans Jr., (eds.), *The Politics of Local Government in Russia* (Washington, DC: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), pp. 19.

provision and civic engagement for there had in fact been welfare-providing institutions in Tsarist Russia from as early as 1775. According to S. Frederick Starr, Catherine II created Social Welfare Boards (*prikazy obshchestvennogo prizreniya*) in order to reverse 'the deepening atrophy of provincial life that had set in after the death of Peter I.'⁶ Indeed, Starr even goes so far as to call them 'proto-zemstvos' and delineates their welfare remit as encompassing 'hospitals, orphanages, insane asylums, reformatories, workhouses, schools and numerous other vital public functions.'⁷ However, financial restrictions on these institutions and their structural dependence on the state - not to mention the condition of serfdom as such - meant that the Social Welfare Boards were very limited in their abilities to distribute resources effectively.⁸

The first *Zemstvo* Statute was enacted on 1 January 1864, three years after the serfs were emancipated by Tsar Alexander II. Since the serfs were now *de jure* - if not *de facto* - in possession of all the rights of free citizens, key administrative tasks previously performed by serf-owning landlords had to be fulfilled by other means. As such, it became necessary to create an educational and welfare-providing infrastructure for the peasantry, newly freed from serfdom. This Statute set up assemblies with decision-making powers on taxation and resource distribution and executive boards to oversee the implementation of decisions made by the assemblies at two territorial-administrative units, the province (*guberniya*) and the district (*uyezd*). In the ten years following the Statute's publication, *zemstvos* were set up in 33 provinces (increasing to 43 in 1914), and were given fourteen areas of responsibility, ranging from securing public food supplies and managing the provision of welfare services, such as schools and hospitals, to fixing and collecting taxes and overseeing the building of churches.⁹

The executive board was the 'workhorse' of the *zemstvo* institution: while the assembly convened for a period of a few weeks once a year, the board worked all year round to ensure decisions were implemented.¹⁰ Among other things, the board

⁶ S. Starr, 'Local Initiative before the Zemstvo' in T. Emmons and W. Vucinich, (eds.), *The Zemstvo in Russia: An Experiment in Local Self-Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 13.

⁷ Starr, 'Local Initiative before the Zemstvo' in Emmons and Vucinich, *The Zemstvo in Russia*, pp. 14.

⁸ J. Hartley, 'The Boards of Social Welfare and the Financing of Catherine II's State Schools', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 67, No. 2, April 1989).

⁹ K. McKenzie, 'The Zemstvo and the Administration' in *The Zemstvo in Russia*, pp. 45.

¹⁰ McKenzie, 'The Zemstvo and the Administration' in *The Zemstvo in Russia*, pp. 52.

was responsible for managing *zemstvo* properties, paying contractors and representing the *zemstvo* in court when necessary. McKenzie provides an example of a particularly active *zemstvo* in the Tver' region which had at its disposal a chancellery, a library, a book keeping office, a statistical department, a department for road maintenance, a drugstore and a book store, as well as many other services. Their central office employed over sixty people.¹¹ Such professional employees became known as the 'Third Element' (as distinguished from the First Element who were the state officials in the provinces and the Second Element who were the elected *zemstvo* deputies), and were notoriously critical of the Tsarist regime. Porter explains that the Third Element's

Daily contacts with the people could not but make them aware of Russia's crying need for reform. And this, coupled with the bureaucracy's general inefficiency, led to their becoming increasingly radical in their political outlook.¹²

Conservative estimates place the number of Third Element staff at between 65 and 70 thousand by the end of the 1890s.¹³

The most radical aspect of the *zemstvo* in terms of political participation was the fact that 'the elective principle had been inaugurated.'¹⁴ At assembly meetings, voting was conducted openly unless it related to sensitive issues such as salaries or wayward deputies, each deputy had only one non-transferrable vote, and decisions were made by majority vote.¹⁵ Election of candidates to the assembly proceeded among rather more complicated lines: according to the 1864 Statute, assembly deputies were elected by the local population on the basis not of class, but of a three-tiered property-based curia system (however, this was changed in the 1890 Statute discussed below). McKenzie delineates the three curiae as follows: '1. rural property held in private ownership; 2. urban property held in private ownership;

¹¹ McKenzie, 'The Zemstvo and the Administration' in *The Zemstvo in Russia*, pp. 55.

¹² T. Porter, *The Zemstvo and the Emergence of Civil Society in Late Imperial Russia 1864-1917* (New York: Mellen Research University Press, 1991), pp. 52.

¹³ Porter, *The Zemstvo and the Emergence of Civil Society in Late Imperial Russia 1864-1917*, pp. 83.

¹⁴ T. Porter and S. Seregny, 'The Zemstvo Reconsidered' in *The Politics of Local Government in Russia*, pp. 22.

¹⁵ McKenzie, 'The Zemstvo and the Administration' in *The Zemstvo in Russia*, pp. 50.

3. communal property held by village communities.¹⁶ This generally, but not exclusively, translated to the three social estates of nobility, merchants and townspeople and the rural peasantry, although those peasants who did own property were allowed to participate in the first curia together with their former owners.¹⁷ From these curiae, electoral congresses were selected, who would participate in the voting on candidates to the *zemstvo* assemblies; candidates came from within the congress itself. The selection rules to the congresses varied among the curiae, as well as the number of deputies to be elected.

At first, there was almost an equal number of nobility and peasantry: in the first *zemstvo* elections, which saw *zemstvos* established in 29 provinces, 42% of elected district deputies were from the nobility and 38% were from the peasantry.¹⁸ This figure remained unchanged in the district elections of 1883-5 but at the province level their representation was only 7%.¹⁹ The Second *Zemstvo* Statute of 1890 discussed below dramatically exacerbated the exclusion of the peasantry from the *zemstvo*. Overall, during the lifespan of the district *zemstvos*, peasants made up approximately a third of the membership, which, according to Dorothy Atkinson, was 'not an especially impressive figure considering that they constituted over four-fifths of the population.'²⁰ As such, although the *zemstvo* on the one hand is frequently seen as a 'proving ground for the training of public initiative,'²¹ on the other it was less an example of 'self'-government but the government of the majority by the privileged minority. This disparity was to play a large part in the eventual downfall of the *zemstvo* movement in 1917. However, despite this, scholars agree that the *zemstvo* did represent an important step towards local democracy within the autocratic Tsarist regime.²²

From its outset, there was confusion about the relationship between the *zemstvo* and the authorities. While the state initialised the decentralisation of administrative functions in order to save money, it wanted to make sure regional

¹⁶ McKenzie, 'The Zemstvo and the Administration' in *The Zemstvo in Russia*, pp. 38.

¹⁷ Porter and Seregny, 'The Zemstvo Reconsidered' in *The Politics of Local Government in Russia*, pp. 22.

¹⁸ D. Atkinson, 'The Zemstvo and the Peasantry', in *The Zemstvo in Russia*, pp. 85.

¹⁹ Atkinson, 'The Zemstvo and the Peasantry', in *The Zemstvo in Russia*, pp. 86.

²⁰ Atkinson, 'The Zemstvo and the Peasantry', in *The Zemstvo in Russia*, pp. 95.

²¹ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, pp. 156; see also A. Fedyashin, *Liberals Under Autocracy: Modernization and Civil Society in Russia 1866-1904* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

²² Fedyashin, *Liberals Under Autocracy*, pp. 131; Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, pp. 179; Porter, *The Zemstvo and the Emergence of Civil Society in Late Imperial Russia 1864-1917*, pp. 294-295.

units prioritised national duty over local needs.²³ The 1864 Statute's primary author, Interior Minister Peter Valuev, stated that the institution was to be 'only a special organ of one and the same state power and from it receives its rights and authority.'²⁴ But *zemstvo* members believed that 'local society's interests should be distinguished from the essentially political interests of the state.'²⁵ The *zemstvos'* *raison d'être* was to provide welfare services to their constituents and to manage local governance issues but many members also had greater political aspirations. In the lead up to the inauguration of the *zemstvos*, large sections of the nobility had petitioned the Tsar for a constitution and a representative assembly and perceived the *zemstvo* as a 'new vehicle for carrying on their fight for national representation.'²⁶ Thus, in the years following the creation of the *zemstvo*, its deputies called for an augmentation of the institution's powers, including the creation of an all-*zemstvo* union that would operate at the national level, as well as the creation of a *zemstvo* at the lowest territorial-administrative level, the *volost'*. These propositions were for a long time ignored by the state as the national union was seen to threaten the 'single integrated system linking ruler to ruled' intended by the authorities,²⁷ while the *volost'* level *zemstvo* was denied out of mistrust of the peasantry.²⁸ In other words, the expansion of the principle of self-government was perceived as a threat to the autocratic regime. Scholars have outlined the inherently conflictual nature of the *zemstvo* principle: on the one hand, the country was ruled in quintessential autocratic style and, at the national level, the Tsar's will was supreme but, on the other hand, societal representatives were delegated to enact the will of the people at the local level.²⁹ This conflict led to an increasingly hostile relationship between the central state and provincial *zemstvo* members and after a while led to the clamping down of their activities through harsh legislation.

²³ Fedyashin, *Liberals Under Autocracy*, pp. 147-48.

²⁴ Porter, *The Zemstvo and the Emergence of Civil Society in Late Imperial Russia 1864-1917*, pp. 20.

²⁵ Porter, *The Zemstvo and the Emergence of Civil Society in Late Imperial Russia 1864-1917*, pp. 1.

²⁶ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, pp. 158.

²⁷ Porter, *The Zemstvo and the Emergence of Civil Society in Late Imperial Russia 1864-1917*, pp. 25.

²⁸ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, pp. 161.

²⁹ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, pp. 161; see also Gel'man in Gel'man and Evans Jr., *The Politics of Local Government in Russia*, pp. 7; Porter and Seregny in *The Politics of Local Government in Russia*, pp. 20.

The second *Zemstvo* Statute came into force in 1890 and was 'designed to incorporate the local self-governing institutions into the state apparatus.'³⁰ Among other things, it required all members of executive boards at the district level to be confirmed by the governors and those at the province level to be confirmed by the Interior Minister; inspections of *zemstvo* executive boards and administrations could be undertaken at will by the regional governor; and appeals by individuals or private organisations could be lodged against decisions made by the *zemstvo*. Most importantly, however, this regressive Statute removed the non-class nature of voting in electoral congresses, thereby removing the peasants' right to elect *zemstvo* deputies and preventing land-owning peasants from participating in the *zemstvo*. As such, after 1890, peasant numbers in district *zemstvos* fell to 31% and to under 2% in provincial *zemstvos*.³¹ This remained the case until 1906 when newly inaugurated Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin gave peasants the same rights as the nobility with respect to state service.

In the years following the 1890 Statute, there were a couple of national crises which served to highlight the inability of the state administration to cope effectively in emergency situations without support from societal organisations and to demonstrate the utility of national-level *zemstvo* operations, eventually leading the authorities to acquiesce to the existence of an all-*zemstvo* union. The first of these crises was the Great Famine of 1891-92. Reasons for the famine have been cited as a combination of poor weather conditions and the government's badly designed economic and agrarian policies.³² When the scale of the disaster became clear, the state was forced to recognise its lack of infrastructure and staff in the regions and had to depend on the *zemstvo* as the cornerstone of the relief efforts. However, Tsar Nicholas II continued to reject the idea of a national *zemstvo* union, famously calling such requests 'senseless dreams' and thereby unwittingly radicalising further swathes of *zemstvo* activists.³³

The second major crisis was the Russo-Japanese War of 1904. As with the country's response to the famine, the *zemstvos* offered support to the government,

³⁰ Porter, *The Zemstvo and the Emergence of Civil Society in Late Imperial Russia 1864-1917*, pp. 55.

³¹ Atkinson, 'The Zemstvo and the Peasantry', in Emmons and Vucinich, *The Zemstvo in Russia*, pp. 89.

³² Porter, *The Zemstvo and the Emergence of Civil Society in Late Imperial Russia 1864-1917*, pp. 35-36.

³³ Porter, *The Zemstvo and the Emergence of Civil Society in Late Imperial Russia 1864-1917*, pp. 44.

but their assistance was only accepted when it quickly became clear that the authorities were unable to 'provide even the most rudimentary services for its stricken soldiers.'³⁴ Nicholas II finally realised the necessity of national-level co-operation among the *zemstvos* in order to deal with the humanitarian crisis caused by the War. Porter claims that by this time 'the organs of local self-government had finally developed into a powerful and autonomous apparatus which could operate without the regime's supervision.'³⁵ This union was again mobilised during the First World War and became formalised as the All-Russian Union of *Zemstvos*. Other non-governmental humanitarian organisations also sprang up to respond to the Great War; indeed, Walkin writes 'never before in Russian history had society, as distinct from the state, exhibited the heights of creative energy reached in 1915-16.'³⁶ However, this demonstrates perhaps less the strength of the *zemstvos* as a social movement and more the tendency of citizens to rally during crises.

Zemstvo activity dipped briefly but sharply after the 1905 Revolution. In 1906, the introduction of the Fundamental Laws created the first national representative assembly and thus 'shifted the centre of political agitation from the *zemstvos* to the Duma.'³⁷ As a result, many liberals left the *zemstvos* and were replaced by conservative and reactionary nobles. This shift has been termed the '*Zemstvo* Reaction'³⁸ which 'stampeded the *zemstvos* into an era of self-liquidation' for the two years that followed.³⁹ Yet, with continual increases to the *zemstvo* budget, the local government institutions were able to work their way out of crisis and significantly expand their work, including the creation of *zemstvos* in nine new regions.⁴⁰ As such, the years leading up to World War One are seen by scholars as the apex of *zemstvo* activity.⁴¹

When it became clear that Russia would have to pull out of the War, the fate of the *zemstvos* took a turn for the worse. As Nicholas II abdicated in 1917, it

³⁴ Porter, *The Zemstvo and the Emergence of Civil Society in Late Imperial Russia 1864-1917*, pp. 75.

³⁵ Porter, *The Zemstvo and the Emergence of Civil Society in Late Imperial Russia 1864-1917*, pp. 93.

³⁶ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, pp. 171.

³⁷ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, pp. 165.

³⁸ Porter and Seregny, 'The Zemstvo Reconsidered' in Gel'man and Evans Jr., *The Politics of Local Government in Russia*, pp. 30.

³⁹ W. Gleason, 'The Zemstvo Union and World War One', in Emmons and Vucinich, *The Zemstvo in Russia*, pp. 375.

⁴⁰ McKenzie, 'The Zemstvo and the Administration' in Emmons and Vucinich, *The Zemstvo in Russia*, pp. 33.

⁴¹ Porter and Seregny, 'The Zemstvo Reconsidered' in Gel'man and Evans Jr., *The Politics of Local Government in Russia*, pp. 30.

became apparent that the *zemstvos* were hindering rather than helping local governance mainly because 'the free Russian peasantry regarded them with hostility and, perhaps even worse, indifference.'⁴² While *zemstvos* were now operating at all administrative levels, including at the national and *volost'* levels, which they had desired for so long, peasants had in fact created alternative institutions outside of *zemstvo* structures and now viewed these Tsarist-era institutions as irrelevant. At the same time, however, new legislation was passed augmenting their powers and making them responsible for 'virtually all matters of local government and economy' and replacing peasant institutions in numerous matters.⁴³ Furthermore, the *zemstvos'* task of providing welfare meant that they were required to co-operate with authorities, which, in the increasingly revolutionary situation, were viewed by ever larger sections of the population as illegitimate. Thus, *zemstvos* were trapped into inaction and many were simply shut down due to lack of peasant support. The *zemstvos* were eventually formally dissolved in 1918 by Bolshevik decree.

This brief discussion has described the functions of the *zemstvos* in terms of their duties in local governance, their relationship to the Tsarist authorities and the role they played in inculcating independent political perspectives within their members. It has shown how the movement grew from the modest idea of providing services to newly freed peasants to operating on a national scale during humanitarian crises. It has shown that the Tsar was eventually forced to acquiesce to the movement as it became clear the regime could not provide sufficient public welfare without it. It has also shown that the limited participation accorded to certain citizens through the *zemstvos* and the frustration with the government garnered as a result translated into a desire to effect social change on a larger scale. Instead of becoming bodies that faithfully enacted national policy at the local level, *zemstvo* members increasingly began to want to change or to help formulate the policy. This suggests that according citizens certain restricted roles in the local governance of an authoritarian regime can be counter-productive for a straightforward rearticulation of centrally-formulated policy. I now move on to discuss the ways in which Soviet citizens were able to influence policy-making.

⁴² W. Rosenberg, 'The Zemstvo in 1917 and under Bolshevik Rule' in Emmons and Vucinich, *The Zemstvo in Russia*, pp. 384.

⁴³ Rosenberg, 'The Zemstvo in 1917 and under Bolshevik Rule' in Emmons and Vucinich, *The Zemstvo in Russia*, pp. 391.

For much of its history, the Soviet Union was seen by numerous Western scholars at the time as a ‘totalitarian’ state, due to its one-party rule⁴⁴ and perceived total control over its citizens.⁴⁵ This theory held some currency during the Stalin period, during which time public participation amounted to little more than mass mobilization. However, under Nikita Khrushchev, participatory mechanisms that had been eviscerated under Stalin were revived and reformed and numerous new ones were set up. As discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, the 1960s Soviet government perceived society to have entered the stage of ‘the withering away of the state’ in which the distinction between state and society was considered meaningless and where everyone would participate in public administration.⁴⁶ Mechanisms were promoted that enabled citizens to influence policy in various degrees: citizens could become soviet deputies and act as mediators between local party and state cadres and residents; they could become citizen inspectors and oversee the implementation of party and state directives; they could join trade unions and help shape economic and labour policy; and they could join social organisations to lobby government on behalf of their interest group and assist in the formation of relevant directives.⁴⁷ Therefore, while severe restrictions on freedoms of expression, assembly and association remained in place during the post-Stalin era, numerous approved channels proliferated that directly or indirectly enabled citizens to influence state policy. This section discusses these avenues and shows that collaborations and lobbying initiatives were successful in cases that related to issues that already had support within the government and were not perceived to pose a threat to state power. (In Chapters Five and Six, I show that such criteria are still relevant today.)

The primary participatory local government bodies in the Soviet Union were

⁴⁴ L. Shapiro, *Totalitarianism* (London: The Pall Mall Press, 1972), pp. 14.

⁴⁵ H. Skilling in H. Skilling and F. Griffiths, (eds.), *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 4.

⁴⁶ I discount here the public displays of adherence to the regime, such as demonstrations, parades and marches, since these activities did not aim to influence local decision-making or resource allocation. They have been expertly analysed in A. Yurchak, *Everything was Forever Until it was No More* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁴⁷ Skilling in Skilling and Griffiths, *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics*, pp. 10.

the soviets, the foundation of legitimacy of communist command. They were made up of elected deputies who performed both the legislative and executive functions of public administration. They began as workers' councils, co-ordinating strike actions during the 1905 Revolution, although their functions frequently extended to local government when the regular public administration was paralysed by the strikes. According to Geoffrey Hosking, members of workers' councils 'gained a brief but intense period of self-government, unforgettable to workers who had never before been allowed to organise in their own interests.'⁴⁸ After the February Revolution, Councils of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies were created as representative bodies of the working classes to operate alongside governmental institutions, peopled mostly by the aristocracy. The most famous of these councils was the Petrograd Soviet, which repeatedly vied for legitimacy with the Provisional Government until the latter was overthrown during the Bolshevik Revolution that October. When that happened, the only remaining local government bodies were the soviets and their national-level organisation, the All-Russian Congress of Soviets (in operation until 1936 when it was replaced by the Supreme Soviet), whose governing authority was enshrined in the first Soviet constitution of 1918.⁴⁹ However, already before the end of 1917, the Bolsheviks had gained control of the majority of these grassroots bodies and, within five years, there were no representatives from other parties inside them.⁵⁰ This began the evisceration of the principle of revolutionary direct democracy from which they had sprung and fuelled their transformation under Stalin into mere 'administrative bodies' directed by the Communist Party, in which the idea of public participation was only symbolic.⁵¹

As part of the processes of de-Stalinization and the graduation to 'developed socialism', Nikita Khrushchev began a revitalization of the system of soviets. According to Theodore Friedgut, the aim of this policy was to 'close the gap between the regime and its citizens' and to restore their functions as 'popular organs of rule.'⁵² The system of soviets enabled two kinds of civic participation: first, intermittent participation that occurred at election time, during which citizens could

⁴⁸ G. Hoskin, *A History of the Soviet Union*, 2nd Edition, (London: Fontana Press, 1990), pp. 32.

⁴⁹ See '1918 Constitution of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic', *Marxists.org*, <http://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/government/constitution/1918/> (accessed 24 July 2014).

⁵⁰ R. Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective*, 2nd Edition, (Oxford: Routledge, 1998), pp. 129.

⁵¹ Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective*, pp. 129.

⁵² T. Friedgut, *Political Participation in the USSR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 157.

participate as candidates, campaigners, voters or election officials and, second, ongoing participation for those who had become deputies. However, since candidates were rigorously vetted by the Communist Party and elections consisted of just one candidate, participation as a voter was symbolic and did not enable citizens to influence the regime. As a deputy, by contrast, while Party control of the soviets had been established 'from within as well as from above', it was possible modestly to shape local public policy.⁵³ Friedgut has described the role of the local deputy in the following way: 'He [sic] is supposed to represent the regime to the citizens and be the *vox populi* to the soviet executive and apparatus.'⁵⁴ Thus, while on the one hand many duties consisted of assisting citizens with bureaucratic activities such as registering for housing, health and educational services, on the other hand deputies could raise citizens' problems relating to welfare with their superiors and thereby indirectly bring about policy change. In order to access public opinion, local deputies could organise village meetings (*skhody*) in order to discuss matters directly affecting inhabitants or they could simply gather individual complaints regarding a certain issue and present them to the soviet.⁵⁵ In his extensive study of local soviet deputies, Jeffrey Hahn has concluded that 'the image of Soviet citizens as passive recipients of government policies and stoic and uncomplaining subjects lacking legitimate opportunities or the inclination to contest and shape the decisions that affect their lives is inaccurate, at least at the local level.'⁵⁶ By 1985, there were over 52,000 soviets comprising 2.3 million elected deputies.⁵⁷

The second avenue for citizens to participate in the regime was via monitory organisations, created for citizens to oversee the implementation of government directives. There were two main types of such bodies, the standing committees inside the soviets and the People's Control Commission.⁵⁸ Their work has been described as 'so pervasive that it constituted in essence a silent social explosion

⁵³ Friedgut, *Political Participation in the USSR*, pp. 163.

⁵⁴ Friedgut, *Political Participation in the USSR*, pp. 182.

⁵⁵ Friedgut, *Political Participation in the USSR*, pp. 154.

⁵⁶ J. Hahn, *Soviet Grassroots: Citizen Participation in Local Soviet Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 262.

⁵⁷ Hahn, *Soviet Grassroots*, pp. 13.

⁵⁸ The following chapter analyses the discourse of civic participation in governance from a Critical Discourse Analytic perspective, since elements of this are evident in Putin's contemporary articulations; indeed, it was during the Soviet Union in which practices of scrutiny (*kontrol'*) of government proliferated.

affecting all public organisations in the Soviet Union and many areas of social life.⁵⁹ However, monitoring bodies did not generally solve the problems of corruption and inefficiency they were founded to address, but rather served to increase the overall levels of bureaucracy. Nonetheless, they constituted an important feedback mechanism from which officials could learn of failing policies and public mood, thereby providing the volunteer inspectors with an albeit weak and indirect means of influence.

Standing committees were bodies operating within the soviets at every administrative level, from those in towns and villages to the Supreme Soviet, and comprised elected soviet deputies and volunteer non-deputies. According to Hahn, they had three functions: reviewing draft legislation, exercising *kontrol'* of economic and administrative agencies of local government, and assisting the executive committee in the implementation of government decisions.⁶⁰ A summary of their discussions was published in the Supreme Soviet's weekly bulletin. Officials under scrutiny were required by law to reply to questions, provide relevant materials requested by the commissions, and to comply with the recommendations issued, with proof of compliance issued within a specified deadline.⁶¹ In 1975, there were nearly 330,000 standing committees comprising nearly 2 million deputies and over 2.5 million volunteer activists.⁶² How far could standing committees influence policy? One study has argued that a lack of effort on the part of committee members to hold officials to account meant that the commissions often served as assistants to the authorities rather than watchdogs.⁶³ Another has argued that the committees' work was often patchy, with some more critical and conscientious than others.⁶⁴ These works suggest that standing commissions did not constitute a major opportunity for citizens to influence policy.

The second monitory body was the People's Control Committee (*Komitet Narodnogo Kontrolya*, KNK), the major public monitoring institution in the later years of the Soviet Union. It mobilised large numbers of volunteer citizens to assist 'in the monitoring the performance of workers and management in enterprises and farms

⁵⁹ J. Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union* (New York: Praeger, 1978), pp. 67.

⁶⁰ Hahn, *Soviet Grassroots*, pp. 228.

⁶¹ Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective*, pp. 110-111.

⁶² Friedgut, *Political Participation in the USSR*, pp. 188.

⁶³ Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 123.

⁶⁴ Hahn, *Soviet Grassroots*, pp. 240-41.

across the country'⁶⁵ with the aim of 'securing the compliance of the economic and administrative bureaucracy with Party and government directives.'⁶⁶ Its roots can be traced back to Lenin's 1920 organization, Rabkrin, the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, which was later merged – then un-merged – with the Party Control Commission, a body that monitored discipline within the Party under Stalin and later Khrushchev. The possibility for citizen inspectors to influence policy through this institution varied with the political climate of the time. Under Stalin, for instance, while the declared aims of Rabkrin exhorted citizens to hold party leaders to account, in reality the organisation became precisely the opposite. By the early 1920s, Rabkrin committees had become 'instruments of central authority acting to silence complaints from below and to enforce party unity from above.'⁶⁷ However, in the post-Stalin years, the institution was reorganized, expanded and renamed. Information gathered by volunteer inspectors was used by the authorities to learn of malfunctioning policies and to formulate new ones. For instance, Jan Adams has shown how information on production outputs gathered by public inspectors in Minsk not only persuaded the Ministry of Local Industry to revise production plans but also was used to develop proposals for further mechanization in local factories.⁶⁸ Summarizing the role of the People's Control Committee in policy-making, she writes, 'policy formulation is, in fact, an important and formidable responsibility of people's controllers at all levels. The broad scope of this activity ranges from simple offering of advice to direct participation in the policy-making process.'⁶⁹ By 1979, the People's Control Committee comprised 9.5 million volunteer inspectors.⁷⁰ Chapter Three shows how the discourse articulated by Soviet leaders regarding the activities of this institution, as well as its successors, has been modified and employed by Putin to encourage civic participation in governance mechanisms today.

The third avenue for Soviet citizens to participate in the shaping of public policy was via trade unions. Union membership cost workers 1% of their salary, in return for which they received an array of social welfare benefits unavailable to their non-unionized colleagues. By the end of the 1970s, Soviet trade unions boasted

⁶⁵ Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁶ Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 3.

⁶⁷ Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 27.

⁶⁸ Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 196.

⁶⁹ Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 193.

⁷⁰ Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 3.

128 million members⁷¹, thus making it the most widespread form of public participation discussed in this section. Soviet trade union rationale was based on Marxist-Leninist ideology, which advanced a principle of inclusion of Soviet citizens in the economic management of the state. In theory, this was to be achieved through the participation of trade union representatives, elected by the workers of a particular enterprise, in seminars, conferences and other decision-making platforms regarding labour policy. However, as with the other participatory mechanisms discussed above, during the Stalin years Party control tightened over the activities of the trade union leadership and its members. Powerful unions were broken up into smaller groups, inhumane working practices and obligatory overtime became the norm, strikes were denounced as 'anti-proletarian' and workers were severely punished for 'truancy'.⁷²

In the Khrushchev era, while the links between trade union policies and the Communist Party remained tight, their organisational structure underwent sweeping reforms, enabling greater participation both at the union level in national economic policy development and at the rank-and-file level through the establishment of regular meetings and societies for workers. From 1957, factory trade union committees were given licence to veto managerial decisions regarding the daily operation of the plant and to advise on alternative proposals.⁷³ For instance, research by Blair Ruble has suggested that the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions wrote large sections of the 1970 Fundamental Principles of Labour legislation and that codes of conduct were frequently drawn up jointly by management and senior union officials.⁷⁴ He has also shown that at the rank-and-file level, local union officials were often able to petition successfully for improved conditions at work and secured welfare provisions for workers.⁷⁵ However, successful collaboration between the unions and the authorities can be attributed to the fact that most union initiatives chimed with the regime's policy of increasing production; therefore, it was often in the government's interests to take trade unions' proposals on board.

⁷¹ B. Ruble, *Soviet Trade Unions: Their Development in the 1970s* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 2.

⁷² Ruble, *Soviet Trade Unions*, pp. 15.

⁷³ Ruble, *Soviet Trade Unions*, pp. 34.

⁷⁴ Ruble, *Soviet Trade Unions*, pp. 41.

⁷⁵ Ruble, *Soviet Trade Unions*, pp. 111.

The fourth avenue for participation in governance existed through membership in the various interest groups, the proliferation of which during the post-Stalin years gave rise, according to H. Gordon Skilling, to 'an increasingly vigorous debate on public policy'.⁷⁶ Such groups consisted of formal social organisations for certain sectors of society perceived to have specific needs, such as war veterans, women and people with disabilities, and professional groups based around certain influential occupations, such as economists, lawyers, police and the military.⁷⁷ In the absence of formal communication channels between the government and these groups, the methods of contact they employed varied widely depending on their relationship to the state and party, but most often consisted of writing letters to government officials, publishing articles in the media, attending open sessions of the soviets or holding spontaneous public gatherings.⁷⁸ Interest groups became extremely numerous in the late Soviet period: the number of people active in formal social organisations alone grew from just under a million in the mid-1960s to over thirty million by the end of the 1970s.⁷⁹ As with the other organisations discussed in this section, social and professional organisations were driven by communist ideology and the party retained control over their internal politics; however, they could successfully advance their agenda on issues with existing state interest. Here, I briefly discuss two examples of social organisations that have been shown to have influenced Soviet policy, albeit modestly: the Soviet Committee of War Veterans and the so-called *zhensovet*y, (women's councils). In both instances, where general support for their causes existed inside government, the groups were able to campaign successfully for the rights of their members and, at times, alter state policy to their favour.

The Soviet Committee of War Veterans (*Sovetskii komitet veteranov voiny*) was founded in 1956, after many early attempts by World War One and Civil War veterans to found organisations that would lobby their interests failed due to the refusal of the Soviet government to admit that any social classes existed beyond the strict Marxist divisions. The change of heart was inspired by activity both in government and among the veterans: first, the Soviet leadership wanted an organisation that could join the World Veterans' Federation in order to advance Cold

⁷⁶ Skilling in Skilling and Griffiths, *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics*, pp. 10.

⁷⁷ Skilling in Skilling and Griffiths, *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics*, pp. 24.

⁷⁸ Skilling in Skilling and Griffiths, *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics*, pp. 44.

⁷⁹ Browning, *Women and Politics in the USSR*, pp. 51.

War propaganda and, second, war veterans had frequently remained in contact after the war and had often formed informal groups. Within ten years, local and regional Committees were being founded in cities and republics across the Union with the aims of lobbying for increased governmental support for veterans at the local level and advancing the Socialist agenda internationally. In spite of the fact that the Committee had been founded for the advancement of state policy, it quickly became more than a mere puppet institution and, according to Mark Edele, 'local enthusiasm had to be curtailed constantly from above'.⁸⁰ By the 1980s, the organisation's tasks included supporting individual campaigns for entitlement, assessing draft legislation for its provisions for veterans, presenting their own legislative proposals and organising mass letter-writing campaigns to the government.⁸¹ At the end of the Soviet Union, veterans had become a respected category of citizen, with numerous specially conferred rights, privileges and accolades, thanks to the Committee's lobbying activities.

Similarly, the *zhensovet* were successful in advancing both the agendas of the government and the interests of Soviet women. *Zhensovet* were women-only councils founded on government initiative, since women, housewives in particular, were perceived to be underexposed to Communist propaganda. With the aim of teaching women political skills and thereby raising their overall political awareness, these institutions proliferated during the late 1950s and could be found in workplaces and apartment blocks, as well as in state structures.⁸² A large part of their work involved helping to fulfil Party directives of increased productivity by lobbying for improved conditions in the workplace, such the provision of crèches and canteens, facilities that were aimed at allowing women to spend more time at work. However, they also developed into 'pressure groups' that successfully campaigned Communist Party officials for the implementation of rest and holiday schemes designed by *zhensovet* members to give women a break⁸³ and for the redistribution of resources from regional budgets to childcare facilities.⁸⁴ It is therefore impossible to dismiss them simply as instruments solely for the fulfilment

⁸⁰ M. Edele, *Soviet Veterans of World War II: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society 1941-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 153.

⁸¹ See Edele, *Soviet Veterans of World War II*, Chapter 9.

⁸² M. Liljeström, in M. Ilić, S. Reid and L. Attwood, (eds.), *Women in the Khrushchev Era* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), pp. 133.

⁸³ G. Browning, *Women and Politics in the USSR* (London: Wheatsheaf, 1987), pp. 114.

⁸⁴ Browning, *Women and Politics in the USSR*, pp. 114.

of state goals. Both the *zhensovety* and the Soviet Committee of War Veterans, while both conforming to Soviet ideology and policy in their own way, were used by their members to advance agendas that benefited their social group, thereby subtly and incrementally influencing state policy.

Several scholars have argued that a major reason for the collapse of the Soviet Union was that the changing nature of civic participation in political institutions ultimately led to the disintegration of those institutions.⁸⁵ Beginning with the mechanisms discussed above, the gradual erosion of authoritarian control grew to a head during *perestroika*, of course, as public participation in governance erupted across the Union and ultimately precipitated its collapse. In policy terms, *perestroika* was intended as a return to true accountability on the part of Party officials by removing Party control of government apparatus and introducing elements of marketization into the economic system; as such, it has been interpreted as a final attempt to reform communism.⁸⁶ Thus, while aiming to 'include the people in a real way into all aspects of the administration of the state such as Lenin dreamt about,' the reforms succeeded in redefining public political space and as a result allowed at last the system's contradictions to be openly scrutinised, debated and eventually, for the large part, delegitimized.⁸⁷ In other words, as with the development of the *zemstvo* movement discussed above, the expansion of limited pluralism in governance contributed to the Soviet regime's collapse.

This section has shown that, in the post-Stalin era, there were numerous opportunities for citizens to shape policy; indeed, the Soviet authorities often sought the advice and assistance of engaged citizens and public organisations. When civic interests conformed to socialist ideology and were not perceived to threaten Communist authority, participatory mechanisms could make modest changes to policy directions and improve the lives of Soviet citizens. However, it was the expansion of such participation that played a major role in the regime's collapse. Like the *zemstvo* movement, the growing levels of inclusion of citizens in governance from the beginning of *perestroika* weakened the regime's control over

⁸⁵ A. Yurchak, *Everything was Forever Until it Was No More* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); O. Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999); S. Solnick, *Stealing the State: Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

⁸⁶ R. Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 4th Edition, (Oxford: Routledge, 2008), pp. 9.

⁸⁷ M. Gorbachev, *Pravda* (1 August 1986), quoted in I. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: a Study in Identity and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 161.

its institutions, allowing the more radical citizens to remould and ultimately delegitimise them. The final section discusses the participatory institutions that have grown up in their place.

Post-Soviet Governance: From Nomenclatura to a Neoliberal Public Sector?

In this section, I detail the numerous participatory opportunities that have been created in the post-Soviet era as part of the on-going administrative reforms that are transforming the Soviet-era state bureaucracy into one based on market principles. First, citizens can join PCBs in order to participate at the decision-making stage; second, they can join 'socially oriented NGOs' to assist at the delivery state; third, they can make use of 'electronic government' portals, which aim to simplify the consumption stage. As mentioned in the introduction, the focus of this thesis is on the creation and expansion of the PCB network as it is the most pervasive of all three mechanisms and, as I show in chapters Four, Five and Six, is the primary subject of the state discourse on civic engagement in governance. In this section, I show that the expansion of these opportunities has occurred alongside the market reform of the public sector, a reduction in possibilities for citizens to elect local and federal authorities and a decentralisation of budget and welfare responsibility to governments at regional and municipal levels. Their creation thus attempts to respond to the problems of policy-making in a system that possesses a rigid political power structure but in which key expertise is now located with new, potentially non-state actors. This sets them apart from the participatory mechanisms of the Tsarist and Soviet eras.

By the end of the 1980s, Soviet public administration was in a decrepit condition, with its bloated and inefficient bureaucracy described by Richard Sakwa as 'polymorphous, with little distinction between political, social or economic institutions.'⁸⁸ After the collapse of the Soviet Union, despite the dire need for change, the process of administrative reform stalled for two reasons. Firstly, it was neglected by both international and domestic reformers during the 1990s as they focussed on economic liberalisation as their primary objective and, secondly, there were strong political forces inside the country that resisted any attempts at

⁸⁸ Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, pp. 125.

change.⁸⁹ Linda Cook has delineated three factors specific to postcommunist states that produced a very different backdrop to welfare reforms to that of other parts of the world. First, under communism, large sections of society had been dependent on the state for income, and few citizens had amassed private savings (those that did, lost them during the financial crash of 1998). Second, there remained for a long time (and, arguably, does to this day) a general sense among the population that the state ought to provide goods and services to citizens and, as a result, there has been a high level of popular backlash against reforms that were perceived to go too far. Third, many corporate structures created during the Soviet era to assist in welfare provision (some of which have been discussed above) continued into the post-Soviet era, had a vested interest in seeing the old welfare state continue and thus were also resistant to change.⁹⁰ Taken together, these factors meant that the population relied on the state for the fulfilment of their most basic needs and resistance to change was high both inside and outside of government. As a result, administrative reform was blocked by these groups for most of the 1990s and was largely forgotten about by policy-makers, despite the on-going financial crisis inside the country (which might otherwise have suggested a need to cut public spending). Change in this area could only be instigated at the end of the 1990s as the economy began to recover.⁹¹

When Vladimir Putin came to power at the turn of the millennium, administrative reform was one of his key objectives. He considered the sluggish and ineffective state bureaucracy to be one of the major barriers to economic development and made the restructuring of the administrative system (in terms of scaling back state intervention in business, decentralizing certain administrative functions and increasing the efficiency of government bodies) a priority.⁹² This huge task has so far been rolled out in three phases of administrative reforms, under the direction of the Ministry of Economic Development and in conjunction with think tanks such as German Gref's Centre for Strategic Planning.⁹³

⁸⁹ Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, pp. 125.

⁹⁰ L. Cook, *Postcommunist Welfare States: Reform Politics in Russia and Eastern Europe* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 1-2.

⁹¹ Cook, *Postcommunist Welfare States*, pp. 5; see also L. Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia*, 2nd Edition, (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), pp. 354-355.

⁹² 'Kontseptsiya administrativnoi reformy v Rossiiskoi Federatsii v 2006-2010 godakh', 25 October 2005, <http://www.arhcity.ru/data/564/1%20conc.pdf> (accessed 31 March 2014).

⁹³ Cook, *Postcommunist Welfare States*, pp. 153.

The first phase took place between 2003 and 2005 and entailed a radical downsizing of government departments and functions (in 2003 there totaled over five thousand departments and agencies, many of whom were expecting their jurisdictions to expand in order to cope with the challenges of reform).⁹⁴ The Presidential Decree ushering in the reforms sought to limit state intervention in the economy, abolish excessive government regulation, ensure that there was no duplication among the activities of government departments, separate government agencies responsible for economic activities, service provision to citizens and the maintenance of state-owned property, and ensure that a separation of powers existed between the federal and regional levels.⁹⁵ In other words, it sought to ensure that government departments had clearly defined and mutually exclusive fields of responsibility, in contrast to the Soviet system in which job descriptions were vague and lines between departments were blurred.

The second phase is the most important for the development of platforms for civic engagement in the governance process. It took place between 2006 and 2010 and aimed to build upon the newly demarcated administrative system. These reforms had four main objectives: to increase government efficiency, make civil servants accountable to the rule of law, improve the quality of public services and guarantee the right of citizens to objective information. The twenty-seven page document stipulated eight strategies for the achievement of these goals: first, 'governance by results', that is, formulating a set of performance indicators for government bodies; second, 'standardization and regulation' of public services across the Federation, which would also include feedback mechanisms for service users; third, the provision of various types of public service (the issuing of certificates, permits etc.) through a single window known as 'multipurpose centres'; fourth, putting information about public services online in a single portal; fifth, combatting corruption in government through a continual down-sizing of government agencies and by developing 'institutions of self-regulation'; sixth, improving levels of engagement between the executive authorities and civil society; seventh, improving regional government bodies' communications and information

⁹⁴ V. Putin, 'Poslaniye Federal'nomy Sobraniyu Rossiiskoi Federatsii', *Prezident Rossii: ofitsial'nyi sait*, 16 May 2003, <http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2003/05/44623.shtml> (accessed 31 March 2014).

⁹⁵ V. Putin, 'Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii: O merakh po provedeniyu administrativnoi reformy v 2003-2004 godakh', No. 824, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 23 July 2003, <http://www.rg.ru/oficial/doc/ykazi/824-03.shtml> (accessed 31 March 2014).

systems; and, eighth, ensuring that the administrative reforms actually take place by providing the necessary resources and creating the appropriate organisational structures.⁹⁶

According to the report, one of the main problems with the administrative system was its closed nature and the lack of feedback channels between the authorities and the citizens. Information held by the authorities was considered secret and there were no structural opportunities for consultation with civil society groups before decisions were made. Thus, the administrative reforms put forward the development of institutional mechanisms that would promote more effective engagement between NGOs and the authorities and increase the overall transparency of government activity. In order to do this, two systems were proposed. The first was a network of public councils, which would encourage public debates on policy areas, conduct scrutiny of government decisions, and include 'civil society' in oversight commissions and working groups. The second was the development of e-government, through which citizens could sign up for services, give feedback on quality and deal with paperwork online. These two systems are discussed below.

The third phase of reforms took place between 2011 and 2013 under the Framework for Lowering Administrative Barriers and Increasing the Accessibility of State and Municipal Services. This phase was less concerned with civic engagement, instead seeking to increase self-regulation of government departments and improving the accessibility of services to citizens.⁹⁷ It also stressed the need for the further decentralisation of public authority (*publichnoi vlast'*) to the regions in the field of administration. In short, the latest phase of reforms reflected the growing understanding among the authorities of the public sector as a diffuse, horizontally organised and partnership-based governance network, a key part in which was to be played by 'socially oriented NGOs', discussed below.

The creation of these federal-level administrative reforms have also come hand in hand with a greater delegation to regional and municipal government of budgetary independence and responsibility for policy areas. Beginning in 1991, an on-going process of decentralisation of the welfare state has been underway with

⁹⁶ 'Kontseptsiya administrativnoi reformy v Rossiiskoi Federatsii v 2006-2010 godakh', 25 October 2005, available here: http://www.fas.gov.ru/legislative-acts/legislative-acts_50334.html (accessed 31 March 2014).

⁹⁷ 'Rasporyazheniye Pravitel'stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 10 iyunya 2011g No. 1021-r g. Moskva', *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 28 June 2011, <http://www.rg.ru/2011/06/28/koncepciya-site-dok.html> (accessed 1 April 2014).

local expenditure on social provision increasing 5-fold to 1996.⁹⁸ Putin continued this trend, despite recentralising political authority (discussed below); he has reformed pensions, benefits, housing and education along neoliberal lines (that is, based chiefly on individual need, rather than universal entitlement), and has handed their administration to the regional and municipal authorities.⁹⁹ Indeed, the number of regional government officials per 10,000 people has increased by approximately a fifth across the board between 2002 and 2012.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the decentralisation of budget responsibility and the cultivation of local government remain key policy areas for both central and regional authorities.¹⁰¹ Linda Cook has cited the influence of 'models of welfare reform then being promoted by global networks' on the public sector reform process.¹⁰² Chapter Three discusses the international discourse of public sector reform.

However, alongside the administrative reforms seeking to expand opportunities for civic participation in governance, there have been increasing restrictions on the opportunity for citizens to elect their representatives at federal, regional and municipal levels. At the federal level, the electorate's inability to alter the political fate of the country was confirmed in 2011, when out-going President Medvedev stated that he and Putin had agreed 'a long time ago' that he would step aside for Putin to return to the Presidency.¹⁰³ The Parliamentary and Presidential elections that followed in 2011-2012 were widely seen to be the most fraudulent

⁹⁸ Cook, *Post-Communist Welfare States*, pp. 66.

⁹⁹ See S. Wengle and M. Rasell, 'The Monetisation of *L'goty*: Changing Patterns of Welfare Provision and Politics in Russia', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 5, (July 2008); A. Magun, 'Higher Education in Russia: Is there a Way out of the Neoliberal Impasse?' in B. Rehbein, (ed.), *Globalization and Inequality in Emerging Societies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011); O. Bychkova and E. Popova, 'Things and People in the Housing and Utility Sector Reform in Russia, 1991-2006' in O. Kharkordin and R. Alapuro (eds.), *Political Theory and Community Building in Post-Soviet Russia* (Oxford: Routledge, 2011); J. Hemment, 'Soviet-Style Neoliberalism? Nashi, Youth Voluntarism and the Restructuring of Social Welfare in Russia', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 56, No. 6 (November/December 2009).

¹⁰⁰ Federal'naya sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki, Chislennost' rabotnikov gosudarstvennykh organov i organov mestnogo samoupravleniya, na 10,000 chelovek postoyannogo naseleniya, http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/state/# (accessed 23 July 2013).

¹⁰¹ See 'Putin: Minfin budet idti po puti detsentralizatsii finansov', *RIA Novosti*, 25 April 2013, <http://ria.ru/economy/20130425/934503631.html> (accessed 17 August 2014); this is also demonstrated in Chapters Three, Five and Six.

¹⁰² Cook, *Post-Communist Welfare States*, pp. 56.

¹⁰³ W. Englund and K. Lally, 'Medvedev confirms he will step aside for Putin to return to Russia's Presidency', *The Washington Post*, 24 September 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/dmitry-medvedev-asks-putin-to-run-for-president-of-russia/2011/09/24/GIQAQGwpsK_story.html (accessed 29 July 2014).

since the collapse of the USSR¹⁰⁴ and sparked the biggest demonstrations of the country's post-Soviet history.¹⁰⁵ While the temporary increase in levels of civic activism sparked some modest electoral reform, the Kremlin also introduced harsh measures clamping down on street protests and foreign-funded NGOs. Overall, the legislative changes in the wake of the demonstrations has not affected the balance of power in the country.

At the regional level, direct gubernatorial elections were abolished in 2004 on national security grounds and were replaced by a system of Presidential appointment.¹⁰⁶ They were re-instated briefly by President Medvedev in response to the unrest of 2011-2012, but in 2013 regional parliaments were given the option of cancelling elections, removing elected governors and submitting a list of three potential candidates for the post to the President, asking him to choose for them. In 2013, seventy-seven out of eighty-three regional governors were members of United Russia.¹⁰⁷

At the municipal level, the ability for citizens to choose their leaders has also been undermined. In 2009, the post of 'city manager' was introduced, which replaced the elected mayor in some cities and worked alongside the mayor in others. City managers were generally under the jurisdiction of the governor and accountable to the city дума with a view 'to depoliticise city governments and to improve the delivery of municipal services to citizens', thus undercutting the authority of the elected mayor and strengthening the link between the Kremlin and the municipal government in the process.¹⁰⁸ Governors and their managers were to become more attuned to the politics of the centre rather than the region. Furthermore, city dumas may now remove a mayor by voting two of his or her annual reports in a row 'unsatisfactory.' Mayors remain the last genuinely competitively elected executive position in Russia, but federal law has continued to

¹⁰⁴ V. Ryzhkov, 'The Dirtiest Elections in Post-Soviet History', *The Moscow Times*, 2 December 2011, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/the-dirtiest-elections-in-post-soviet-history/449079.html> (accessed 29 July 2014).

¹⁰⁵ This is covered in more detail in Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁶ A. Tarasenko, D. Dubrovsky and A. Starodubtsev, *Navesiti mosti mezhdu obshchestvom i gosudarstvom: obshchestvennyye konsul'tativnye struktury v regionakh Severo-Zapada*, (St Petersburg: Tsentr nezavisimyykh sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniy, 2011).

¹⁰⁷ J. Earle, 'Bill to Limit Gubernatorial Elections Approved', *The Moscow Times*, 23 January 2013, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/bill-to-limit-gubernatorial-elections-approved/474464.html> (accessed 27 March 2013).

¹⁰⁸ J. Moses, 'Russian Local Politics in the Putin-Medvedev Era', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 62, No. 9 (November 2010).

undermine them. Since 2005, over one third of Russian cities have abolished Mayoral elections altogether.¹⁰⁹

Overall, the possibilities for citizens to engage in electoral politics at all levels have gradually declined as the mechanisms for non-electoral public participation have expanded. At the same time, as the Soviet-era bureaucracy is streamlined and certain functions are privatised, outsourced and decentralised, citizens are needed to play a greater role in public administration. Furthermore, as elections become less effective as a means to gauge public opinion, other mechanisms must fulfil that function. Contemporary participatory mechanisms must therefore respond to the demands both of the neoliberal public sector and the authoritarian regime. I now take a closer look at these three mechanisms: the PCB network, socially oriented NGOs and e-government.

Civic Participation at the Decision-Making Stage: The PCB Network

The PCB network is the main focus of this thesis. It is government's flagship mechanism to increase civic participation in governance and has been promoted as a means of enacting *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* over government activities. It has been expanding rapidly ever since the foundation of two federal-level bodies in the mid-2000s: the Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights (hereafter Presidential Human Rights Council) and the Federal Public Chamber. Created just prior to the commencement of the second wave of reforms, these bodies provided the blueprint for the extension of PCBs as the main platform for dialogue between regional and municipal authorities and the public.¹¹⁰ First, in 2004, the Presidential Commission for Human Rights was transformed into the then-named Presidential Council for Assistance in the Development of Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights (and was given its current name in 2011). According to the Presidential Decree, the aims of the Council include assisting the President in the protection of human rights, developing proposals to improve human rights, informing the President of the state of human rights in the country, scrutinizing draft laws to ensure they protect citizens' rights, making suggestions to the President on how to increase engagement with NGOs, and developing mechanisms of public scrutiny in the field

¹⁰⁹ V. Gel'man and S. Ryzhenkov, 'Local Regimes, Subnational Governance and the 'Power Vertical' in Contemporary Russia', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 63, No. 3, (2011).

¹¹⁰ Tarasenko, Dubrovsky, and Starodubtsev, *Navesiti mosty mezhdu obshchestvom i gosudarstvom: obshchestvennyye konsul'tativnyye struktury v regionakh Severo-Zapada*, pp. 13.

of rights protection.¹¹¹ This dual role of assistance and scrutiny (expanded from the monitory activities of a number of the Soviet era bodies discussed above) was later reproduced in all the institutions across the PCB network.

In April the following year, Federal Law No. 32 created the Federal Public Chamber. It took the consultative principles of the Presidential Human Rights Council and extended them to members of NGOs and other public figures who could join the Chamber as 'public experts'. According to this law, the Chamber was founded in order to facilitate co-operation between citizens and the authorities, represent citizens' interests to the authorities, protect the rights of citizens and NGOs and monitor the activities of state institutions, with one of its main tasks being the implementation of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* of government activities.¹¹² This was the first time an institution had been legally required to conduct this task, although the text did not contain a definition of precisely what it entailed. In the numerous modifications to the law that have followed, the concept has remained present but undefined.¹¹³ In 2013, the Chamber was expanded from 126 to 166 members and the selection process was reformed. Now the Chamber comprises forty members directly selected by the President, eighty-three members of regional public chambers chosen by the existing members and forty-three NGO leaders, selected from a shortlist by the public through an online voting system.¹¹⁴ Each member of the Chamber serves a three-year term and candidates may stand for re-selection; indeed many do, as membership in the Chamber is clearly associated with a status position.¹¹⁵

In the seven years of the Public Chamber's existence, it has come to play a central role in Russian social politics, examining draft legislation, conducting studies, distributing grants, processing citizens' appeals and complaints, and co-ordinating other corporate bodies in the PCB network, such as public councils,

¹¹¹ 'Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 6 noyabrya 2004g No. 1417', *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, <http://www.rg.ru/2004/11/12/sovet-prava.html> (accessed 1 April 2014).

¹¹² 'Federal'nyi Zakon Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 4 aprelya g. N 32 F3 Ob Obshchestvennoi Palate Rossiiskoi Federatsii', *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, <http://www.rg.ru/2005/04/07/obshchestv-palata-dok.html> (accessed 30 April 2012).

¹¹³ However, *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* has recently been fully defined for this first time in the Law on the Foundations of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* in the Russian Federation, discussed in Chapter Four.

¹¹⁴ 'Putin pomenyal poryadok izbraniya chlenov obshchestvennoi palaty', *RIA Novosti*, 24 July 2013, <http://ria.ru/society/20130724/951771926.html> (accessed 18 September 2013).

¹¹⁵ A. Evans, 'The Public Chamber and Social Conflicts in Russia', Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, San Francisco, California, April 2010.

regional chambers and public monitoring commissions, as well as human rights ombudsmen across the Federation. It has numerous commissions working on topics ranging from science and innovation, regional development and cultural heritage to social welfare, media, and public safety, as well as smaller working groups focussing on youth, elections, construction, industrial modernization, anti-corruption initiatives and others. It holds four to five plenary sessions a year and over a hundred public events such as public hearings and round tables.¹¹⁶ Elena Belokurova has called the Public Chamber 'the most important body which represents the interests of NGOs.'¹¹⁷

The public chamber model has also been replicated at the regional level, with 69 (out of a possible 83) regional public chambers listed on the Federal Public Chamber website, each with between 21 and 50 members.¹¹⁸ Public chambers have also appeared at the municipal level in cities such as Samara, Irkutsk, Tomsk, Chelyabinsk, Ryazan', Yekaterinburg, Tver, and Yaroslavl', and dozens, if not hundreds, are in operation many in smaller conurbations. The aims of these bodies are identical to the Federal Public Chamber in that they attempt to encourage citizens and NGOs to carry out the same mix of assistance to and scrutiny of the government that characterises the federal body. A reading of their legislation suggests that it is these activities that are understood to comprise *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*. In Chapters Five and Six, I explore regional and municipal PCBs in more detail.

Article twenty of the law on the Public Chamber also permitted the creation of public councils alongside government ministries, agencies and other structures. These councils were then regulated according to the governmental decrees No. 481 of 2nd August 2005 and No. 842 of 4th August 2006. The 2005 legislation, 'On the Order of Formation of Public Councils attached to Federal Governmental Ministries and Services and Agencies Subordinate to these Federal Ministries, as well as Federal Governmental Agencies and Services', allowed for the optional creation of public councils under federal ministries, but the resolution, aside from confirming their voluntary status, did not outline how members were to be chosen or what the

¹¹⁶ 'O Palate', Obshchestvennaya Palata Rossiiskoi Federatsii, <http://www.oprf.ru/about/> (accessed 19 September 2013).

¹¹⁷ E. Belokurova, 'NGOs and Politics in Russia Regions' in Gel'man and Ross (eds.) *The Politics of Sub-National Authoritarianism in Russia*, pp. 116.

¹¹⁸ Obshchestvennaya Palata Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 'Palaty po okrugam', http://www.oprf.ru/about/interaction/region_chambers/1445/1435/ (accessed 12 September 2013).

councils' tasks should be.¹¹⁹ This Resolution was later modified on 6 June 2013 to include the additional amendments outlined in the 2006 Presidential Decree.¹²⁰ This Decree stated that public councils were to be formed jointly by the federal authority in question and the Federal Public Chamber and were to comprise independent experts, members of the Federal Public Chamber, representatives of NGOs and other citizens. However, its membership still had to be confirmed by the relevant government authority, meaning that heads of government bodies could choose individuals unlikely to challenge their *modus operandi*.¹²¹ Since then, the public council model has spread across the entire Federation, with councils set up under regional ministries, procurator's offices, mayors' offices and other local government departments.

In 2008, *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* was made the subject of a law for the first time as prison monitoring bodies known as public monitoring commissions (*Obshchestvennyye nablyudatel'nyye komissii*) were created by Law No. 76 'On the *Obshchestvennyi Kontrol'* of the Protection of Human Rights in Places of Detention and Assistance to Persons in Places of Detention.'¹²² However, even here the concept is not given a full definition; rather, the law states that *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* is to be performed by public monitoring commissions, and continues with an elaboration of PMCs' activities. These include inspections of detention facilities, followed by the preparation of recommendations for improvement to the facility authorities, the handling of complaints by inmates and helping prison authorities ensure that prisoners' rights are observed. In short, it is the combination of assistance and scrutiny that characterises public chambers. Furthermore, the PMC application process is conducted by the Federal Public Chamber and regional chambers often provide training sessions and administrative support. With this law, then, the network of PBCs began to expand and consolidate, and the concept of

¹¹⁹ Postanovleniye Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 2 avgusta 2005 g. N 481 g. Moskva, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 9 August 2005, <http://www.rg.ru/2005/08/09/obsch-sovety-dok.html> (accessed 11 September 2013).

¹²⁰ Postanovleniye Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 6 iyunia 2013 g. N 480 g. Moskva, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 18 June 2013, <http://www.rg.ru/2013/06/18/sovety-site-dok.html> (accessed 11 September 2013).

¹²¹ 'Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 4 avgusta 2006 g. N 842', *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 8 August 2006, <http://www.rg.ru/2006/08/08/ministerstva-sovety-dok.html> (accessed 11 September 2013).

¹²² Federal'nyi Zakon ot 10.06.2008 No 76-F3 (Red ot 06.12.11), 'Ob obshchestvennom kontrole za obespecheniyem prav cheloveka v mestakh prinuditel'nogo soderzhaniya i sodeistvii litsam nakhodyashchimsya v mestakh prinuditel'nogo soderzhaniya', *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 18 June 2008, <http://www.rg.ru/2008/06/18/prava-cheloveka-dok.html> (accessed 30 July 2014).

obshchestvennyi kontrol' became a central, legally enshrined component of its activities. Chapter 4 discusses the PMC law in more detail.

The development of public councils proceeded along more diffuse lines. In 2009, the Federal Public Chamber conducted research into public councils and found that many were reducing the number of their meetings, had been created in contravention to existing legislation, or had become 'decorative' bodies with few, if any, critical voices.¹²³ The 2010 Public Chamber annual report on the condition of 'civil society' in the country, presented the results of this research, noting a 'decline in public councils' enthusiasm as well as the irrelevance, narrowness and pettiness of the issues they address.¹²⁴ The report cites the example of the Public Council under the Federal Ministry of Education, which

Held four meetings in 2007, two meetings in 2008, and only one meeting in 2009. Despite the on-going reform of educational institutions, none of these meetings were devoted to such areas of public concern as the Unified State Examination or the shift to the two-tier system of Bachelor's and Master's programmes. No meetings were focused on science despite the urgent need for innovation.¹²⁵

Furthermore, it showed that apolitical celebrities were frequently chosen over relevant experts. For instance, the Public Council under the Ministry of Defence

Includes about 60 members among whom there are virtually no senior experts, university staff or other people highly qualified in the field. Most of the council is made up of entertainers and talk-show hosts.¹²⁶

¹²³ Informatsionnyi biulleten' No. 1, Koordinatsionnyi komitet obshchestennykh sovetov, Moscow: March 2011, <http://www.oprf.ru/files/dokument2011/infbyullet27072011.doc> (accessed 24 September 2013).

¹²⁴ Obshchestvennaya Palata Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 'Doklad o sostoyanii grazhdanskogo obshchestva Rossiiskoi Federatsii za 2010 god', Moscow 2010, pp. 40.

¹²⁵ Obshchestvennaya Palata Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 'Doklad o sostoyanii grazhdanskogo obshchestva Rossiiskoi Federatsii za 2010 god', Moscow 2010, pp. 40.

¹²⁶ Obshchestvennaya Palata Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 'Doklad o sostoyanii grazhdanskogo obshchestva Rossiiskoi Federatsii za 2010 god', Moscow 2010, pp. 93.

At the local level, the situation was revealed to be even more patrimonial: of the 22 municipal public councils examined, 19 were full of people with close links to the city head.¹²⁷

However, in a key speech to the Federation Council around this time, President Medvedev emphasised the importance of uniting social forces behind his programme of modernization.¹²⁸ In order to resolve the country's economic, social and demographic problems, he called for the foundation of 'modernization coalitions' which would create a 'state-society partnership' to improve economic and social conditions in the country.¹²⁹ Public councils were seen as a part of the fabric of this partnership alongside human rights ombudsmen, mechanisms for the development of small and medium-sized businesses and grants and subsidies for NGO work.¹³⁰ So instead of scrapping the public council idea, legislation was introduced to consolidate their relationship both to the authorities and to the public, reform their membership process and co-ordinate their activities.

The first piece of legislation to outline the rationale for public councils and to define their role in interacting with government agencies was Federal Law No. 3 'On the Police', signed into law on 7 February 2011, six years after public councils made their first entry into the Russian legal codex. Article 2, paragraph 9 states that the public councils attached to the Interior Ministry both at federal and regional levels are intended to

Ensure the harmonization of the socially relevant interests of Russian citizens, federal government, state authorities, local self-government, NGOs and human rights, religious and other organizations, as well as professional bodies, in order to address the most important issues of policing.

In other words, the development of the police system was seen as a task to be undertaken by all sections of society. It assumed that these sections could be united

¹²⁷ Obshchestvennaya Palata Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 'Doklad o sostoyanii grazhdanskogo obshchestva Rossiiskoi Federatsii za 2011 god', Moscow 2011, pp. 81.

¹²⁸ D. Medvedev, 'Poslaniye Federal'nomy Sobraniyu Rossiiskoi Federatsii', *Prezident Rossii*, 12 November 2009, <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/5979> (accessed 10 September 2013).

¹²⁹ Obshchestvennaya Palata Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 'Doklad o sostoyanii grazhdanskogo obshchestva Rossiiskoi Federatsii za 2009 god', Moscow 2009, pp. 4.

¹³⁰ Obshchestvennaya Palata Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 'Doklad o sostoyanii grazhdanskogo obshchestva Rossiiskoi Federatsii za 2009 god', Moscow 2009, pp. 50.

in a single vision via the public council. The public councils were to be comprised of citizens and NGOs willing to work on a voluntary basis in order to monitor police activities alongside NGOs, the Federal Public Chamber and public monitoring commissions.¹³¹ This was a marked distinction from previous legal documents, which had stated that public councils were an optional extra for government departments: here they were made compulsory and their specific functions were outlined, creating a blueprint for their formation in other ministries. These functions revealed an understanding of public participation in state policy-making and delivery as a means of creating a unified approach to law enforcement: society should assist the state in carrying out its tasks. However, it did not specify what should be done with the results of the citizens' reviews and public hearings, nor did it state how members were to be selected.

Following swiftly in the police's footsteps, the Presidential Decree of 23 May 2011 No. 668 'On Public Councils under the Interior Ministry and its Regional Offices' was passed, in which the legal basis for public councils was further expanded, giving them a definition as well as legally enshrined rights. According to this decree, a public council is an 'advisory body (*soveshchatel'nyi organ*) whose resolutions are non-binding (*rekomentatel'nyye*).'¹³² For the first time, the decree outlined a series of 'rights' available to public councils and their members. Public councils and their members, while not possessing any executive authority, were given broad legal mandate to observe the work of the Interior Ministry in full. They were to be given access to internal ministerial documents, decision-making processes and relations with citizens; they could probe areas of work deemed substandard and suggest ways to improve; and they could require engagement in their work from ministerial officials. The agenda and minutes of their meetings were to be posted online immediately after sessions. In other words, they were to conduct *obshchestvennyi kontrol*'. However, the decree still stated that the council's final membership was to be approved by the Minister of Internal Affairs, with the federal-level council then co-ordinating appointments at regional councils. As such, the question of 'loyalty' remained unresolved. Overall, this decree established public councils within the eight major departments of the Interior Ministry, in 82 federal

¹³¹ 'Federal'nyi Zakon Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 7 fevralya 2011 g. N3-F3, *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 8 February 2011, <http://www.rg.ru/2011/02/07/police-dok.html> (accessed 24 September 2013).

¹³² 'Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 23 maya 2011 g. N 668', *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 27 May 2011, <http://www.rg.ru/2011/05/27/ukaz-dok.html> (accessed 24 September 2013).

subjects and at 10 transport offices. In all, it founded 102 public councils hosting a combined total of 2049 people.¹³³ Furthermore, it prompted the proliferation of public councils in the federal and regional offices of virtually all government agencies, departments and services: by the end of 2011, there were 52 public councils at the federal level alone.¹³⁴

Putin has repeatedly expressed support for the idea of public councils, considering them an expansion of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*. When he returned to the Presidency in May 2012, he passed Decree No. 601, 'On Guidelines for Improving State Governance' which required that all federal ministries conduct public discussions of proposals at all stages of a given project's development and stated the necessity of public consultation of draft regulations at national and regional levels. Public councils were considered to play a central role in this process and the decree finally addressed their method of formation, stating that the Federal Public Chamber should be involved in the formation of public councils, though it still did not state how. It also reiterated that independent experts and NGOs should form part of their membership and called for the creation of a list of activities, which cannot be undertaken by government authorities without prior consultation with its public council, setting a deadline for these changes as September 2012.¹³⁵ Thus, on 1 September Resolution No. 887 was issued, stating that the list would comprise state initiatives and draft bills of various types.¹³⁶ Government bodies were now legally required to consult their public councils on a host of issues.

Reform of the membership selection process was finally addressed in spring 2013. From 1 July 2013, federal level public council members were to be selected via a combined system of internet voting and Public Chamber involvement. Any citizen may put herself forward and then special commissions will prepare a list of candidates, which the public will then vote on electronically. According to the Kremlin, candidates are now considered on the basis of relevant professional and socially-oriented experience in the field of activity of the particular ministry,

¹³³ Obshchestvennaya Palata Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 'Doklad o sostoyanii grazhdanskogo obshchestva Rossiiskoi Federatsii za 2011 god', Moscow 2011, pp. 82.

¹³⁴ Obshchestvennaya Palata Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 'Doklad o sostoyanii grazhdanskogo obshchestva Rossiiskoi Federatsii za 2011 god', Moscow 2011, pp. 77-81.

¹³⁵ 'Podpisan Ukaz ob osnovnykh napravleniyakh sovershenstvovaniya sistemy gosupravleniya', *Prezident Rossii*, <http://kremlin.ru/news/15239> (accessed 17 September 2013).

¹³⁶ 'Postanovleniye Pravitel'stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 1 sentyabrya 2012 g. No. 877 g. Moskva', *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 11 September 2012, <http://www.rg.ru/2012/09/11/dokumenty-site-dok.html> (accessed 17 September 2013).

academic titles, and leadership experience and so on.¹³⁷ On 12 September 2013, a working group was established to draw up criteria for the 'standardization of the work of Public Councils.'¹³⁸ The effects of this significant reform to the formation process of public councils on their critical capacity will become evident over the next couple of years.

It is clear that the PCB network has become a central element of civic participation in policy-making in Russia and is likely to continue to expand in the future. The Federal Public Chamber has become the centrepiece of the PCB network and co-ordinates the work and the selection processes of public councils and PMCs. The network's practices of simultaneous assistance and scrutiny form the basis of the concept of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, and are considered to increase civic participation in governance in a consensual and controllable fashion. Overall, the PCB network enables the authorities to harness human resources located outside formal state structures, receive feedback from the public regarding failing policies, and attempt to address endemic corruption inside the state bureaucracy, without challenging its legitimacy.

Civic Participation at the Delivery Stage: Socially Oriented NGOs

Opportunities for civic participation at the delivery stage of public policy have been expanded through the development of 'socially oriented NGOs'. As such, many more NGOs have been formed in the last five years, often by target group representatives, such as families with disabled children. However, post-Soviet government policy has been somewhat ambivalent towards NGOs. Due to the virtual non-existence of formal non-state public activity during the Soviet Union, post-Soviet policy had to be designed from scratch and, until 2006, there were few restrictions on the operation of independent organisations in the country. In 2001, an attempt was made to co-ordinate a federal-level policy towards NGOs at the Civic Forum, a two-day meeting between President Vladimir Putin, members of his cabinet and over 4,000 representatives from more than three hundred NGOs and civic groups. The aim was to discuss practical solutions to Russia's social problems;

¹³⁷ 'Obshchestvennyye sovety pri ministerstvakh i vedomstvakh budut rabotat' po yedinyim standartam', *Garant*, 13 September 2013, <http://www.garant.ru/news/493965/> (accessed 17 September 2013).

¹³⁸ 'Obshchestvennyye sovety pri ministerstvakh i vedomstvakh budut rabotat' po yedinyim standartam', *Garant*, 13 September 2013, <http://www.garant.ru/news/493965/> (accessed 17 September 2013).

indeed, it was here that the idea for a consultative body that would bring NGOs and government officials together was first mooted. However, the Forum was received ambivalently by Western and Russian observers: on the one hand, it was seen by liberals as a public articulation of the Russian government's acknowledgement of the importance of civil society;¹³⁹ but on the other hand, complaints by civil society activists which saw the Civic Forum as an attempt by the government to corporatize the NGO sphere dissuaded the government following through on plans made during the event.¹⁴⁰

Policy towards NGOs changed during the mid-2000s. The wave of the so-called 'colour revolutions', particularly the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine, were perceived by many in Russia to have been fuelled by Western-funded NGOs; there was a widespread fear inside the political establishment that such an upheaval could also happen in Russia. Consequently, legislation was introduced to monitor the activities of NGOs funded from abroad. In December 2005, a law was passed by the Duma allowing the authorities to conduct extensive audits of NGOs, and requiring the latter to register with the Federal Registration Service within six months or face being closed down and provide detailed annual reports of their financial activities. While this law provoked an outcry from international human rights organisations and some domestic NGOs, scholars have tended to view the law as a step towards making the Russian NGO sector more accountable, transparent and professional.¹⁴¹ However, in 2009, President Medvedev reduced the number of audits to once every three years and simplified the registration process.¹⁴²

In spite of the occasionally contradictory governmental approach to the non-profit sector, certain NGOs have grown to play an active role in regional governance over the last ten years. They are often called upon by regional administrations for their expert advice and are frequently considered by authorities to operate more efficiently than their own cumbersome state agencies.¹⁴³ In 2010, amendments to

¹³⁹ M. Weigle, 'On the Road to the Civic Forum: State and Society from Yeltsin to Putin', *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 10, 2002.

¹⁴⁰ A. Evans, 'The First Steps of Russia's Public Chamber: Representation or Coordination?', *Demokratizatsiya*, (Fall, 2008).

¹⁴¹ Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, pp. 344; D. Javeline and S. Lindemann-Komarova, 'A Balanced Assessment of Russian Civil Society', *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Spring/Summer 2010).

¹⁴² 'Medvedev Approves Simpler Rules for NGOs', *RIA Novosti*, 20 July 2009, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090720/155568787.html> (accessed 8 August 2013).

¹⁴³ Belokurova, 'NGOs and Politics in Russia Regions' in Gel'man and Ross, *The Politics of Sub-National Authoritarianism in Russia*, pp. 109.

the Law on NGOs formally introduced the category of 'socially oriented NGOs' into the legal codex.¹⁴⁴ According to this law, socially oriented NGOs are non-profit organisations that carry out activities aimed at solving social problems such as conservation, historical preservation, sports, education and healthcare and are entitled to receive various forms of support from regional authorities, ranging from tax exemption and training provision to direct financial sponsorship.¹⁴⁵ This category distinguishes them both from organisations perceived to have a critical or anti-government agenda, such as election-monitoring organisation, GOLOS, and Russian human rights organisation, Memorial, and from national branches of international organisations, such as Amnesty Russia, Human Rights Watch or Greenpeace. In 2013, socially oriented NGOs were awarded \$75 million in order to implement 'socially beneficial' projects.¹⁴⁶

In addition, NGOs may compete for government contracts (*goszakazy*) as part of a process of outsourcing public services to third parties.¹⁴⁷ From 1 January 2014, 15% of the annual volume of contracts was to be allocated to small and medium businesses and socially oriented NGOs.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, since 2005, the Presidential Grants system has been holding annual competitions among NGOs in order to distribute state funding: in 2013, over 2 billion roubles were distributed to 124 organisations in 47 regions¹⁴⁹ according to the social value of the projects proposed and the ability of the organisations to fulfil them.¹⁵⁰ Overall, the amount reserved in the state budget for the support of non-profit organisations has been growing year on year, almost doubling between 2012 and 2013¹⁵¹ (most likely to

¹⁴⁴ E. Chebankova, 'State-sponsored Civic Associations in Russia: Systemic Integration or the "War of Position"?', *East European Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 4, (2012).

¹⁴⁵ 'Federal'nyi Zakon Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 5 aprelya 2010g No. 40 F2: O vnesenii izmenenii v otdel'nyye zakonodatel'nyye akty Rossiiskoi Federatsii po voprosu podderzhki sotsial'no oriyentirovannykh nekommercheskikh organizatsii', *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 7 April 2010, <http://www.rg.ru/2010/04/07/nko-dok.html> (accessed 31 March 2014).

¹⁴⁶ 'Putin Orders Allocating \$75 Mln for Socially-Oriented NGOs', *RIA Novosti*, 30 March 2013, <http://en.ria.ru/russia/20130330/180346679/Putin-Orders-Allocating-75-Mln-for-Socially-Oriented-NGOs.html> (accessed 31 March 2014).

¹⁴⁷ See 'Glavnaya Portal Zakupok', <http://www.zakupki.gov.ru/epz/main/public/home.html> (accessed 1 April 2014).

¹⁴⁸ 'Monopolii i goskompanii budut otdavat' malomu biznesu minimum 15% zakazov – Medvedev', *Interfax*, 27 September 2013, <http://www.interfax-russia.ru/South/special.asp?id=437536&sec=1702> (accessed 28 July 2014).

¹⁴⁹ 'Obnarodovan spisok NKO, poluchivshikh prezidentskiy granty', *Radio Svoboda*, 5 December 2013, <http://www.svoboda.org/content/article/25190550.html> (accessed 1 April 2014).

¹⁵⁰ 'Polozheniye o konkurse', *Grazhdanskoye Dostoinstvo*, 25 September 2013, http://www.civildignity.ru/ru/info-show/konkurs-2013/polojenie_o_konkurse (accessed 1 April 2014).

¹⁵¹ 'Prezidentskiye Granty 2013, 2012, 2011: Obzor', *Portal NKO*, <http://portal-nko.ru/finance/konkurs/16500/> (accessed 1 April 2014).

compensate for the lack of international grants in the wake of the 'foreign agents law' discouraging Russian NGOs from accepting foreign funding, discussed below.) In the next five years, NGOs are set to increase their presence in the provision of goods and services to Russian citizens: an important state-commissioned report, Strategy 2020, which details the programme for social and economic development in Russia to 2020, stipulates that NGOs should be one of the key recipients of outsourcing contracts for public service provision.¹⁵²

At the same time, government policy has demonised NGOs perceived to work against the state. While citing 'civil society' as an important factor in the country's modernization programme and overall political development,¹⁵³ there have been on-going raids on NGOs considered by the Kremlin to be antithetical to its vision of 'civil society', summarised by one scholar as the idea of 'a coherent, ordered space where individuals assist the state in the interests of the whole.'¹⁵⁴ Further, in the wake of the mass protests that spread across the country following the December 2011 parliamentary elections, a draconian law on NGOs was introduced. The so-called 'Foreign Agents Law' came into effect in November 2012 and requires NGOs that receive funding from foreign governments or international bodies which, 'regardless of the goals and aims set out in their charter, organise and conduct political activities which influence government decision-making'¹⁵⁵ to register with the Justice Ministry as 'foreign agents' (a title which many view as a euphemism for 'spy'), to present a financial report to the authorities once a quarter, to co-operate with annual audits by Russian authorities, and to state on all online and print materials that they are 'foreign agents'. Failure to comply with the law could lead to a suspension of the organisation's activities for a period of up to six months, fines between 300,000 and 500,000 roubles, or up to two years imprisonment.

¹⁵² See 'Predvaritel'nyye predlozheniya dlya obnovleniya Kontseptsii sotsial'no-ekonomicheskogo razvitiya Rossii na period do 2020 goda (Strategiya-2020) po napravleniyu "Sovershenstvovaniye institutsional'nykh usloviy funktsionirovaniya nekommercheskikh organizatsiy, privlecheniye nekommercheskikh organizatsiy k predostavleniyu gosudarstvennykh (munitsipal'nykh) uslug (rabot), razvitiye mekhanizmov uchastiya nekommercheskikh organizatsiy v upravlenii predostavleniyem obshchestvennykh uslug", <http://2020strategy.ru/g16/documents/32655464.html> (accessed 1 April 2014).

¹⁵³ S. Salmenniemi, 'Struggling for Citizenship: Civic Participation and the State in Russia, *Demokratizatsiya*, Fall 2010.

¹⁵⁴ J. Richter, 'The Ministry of Civil Society? The Public Chamber and the Regions', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.56, No. 6, (November/December, 2009).

¹⁵⁵ Ministerstvo Yustitsii Rossiiskoi Federatsii, <http://minjust.ru/ru/node/2715> (accessed 8 August 2013).

In sum, the supportive legislation and funding mechanisms for NGOs developed in recent years point to a recognition by the federal authorities of the importance of the non-profit sector both as a source of knowledge and resources and to an increasing level of reliance on NGOs for service provision at the regional level. However, its simultaneous persecution of certain ‘oppositional’ NGOs suggests the desire to retain control over which kind of groups can participate in service provision. This echoes the logic of the Putin-era reform agenda more broadly, which seeks to harness citizens’ participation in an apolitical fashion while closing down opportunities to challenge the political authority.

Civic Participation at the Consumption State: e-Government

As mentioned above, the administrative reforms of 2006-2008 stipulated that various administrative functions should be moved online. Since then, e-government has developed in two ways: government departments have been asked to transfer documents and materials online and citizens have been encouraged to sign up for services and complete paperwork through online portals. The main aims of these initiatives were to increase the transparency of government activities, reduce corruption and allow citizens greater control over the kinds of services they require. In February 2009, Law No. 8 “On Access to information about the activities of government agencies and local government”, was published, requiring government bodies to make information about their activities freely accessible online or in paper format and allowed citizens to attend certain meetings of local government bodies.¹⁵⁶ A website entitled *Otkrytoye Pravitel'stvo* (Open Government) has been set up to co-ordinate these activities.¹⁵⁷

One result of these measures is that a huge amount of information has been made publically available on the internet. The various types of information relating to the public sector now online are huge and very diverse, with all federal agencies required by law since April 2013 to place information regarding draft laws on a specially created website.¹⁵⁸ Some regions have gone further and have transferred

¹⁵⁶ ‘Federal’nyi Zakon Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 9 fevralya 2009 g. No 8-FZ’, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 13 February 2009, <http://www.rg.ru/2009/02/13/dostup-dok.html> (accessed 27 May 2014).

¹⁵⁷ ‘Chto takoe otkrytoye pravitel'stvo?’ *Otkrytoye Pravitel'stvo*, <http://xn--80abeamcuufxbhgound0h9cl.xn--p1ai/opengov/> (accessed 1 April 2014).

¹⁵⁸ See ‘O Portale’, Yedinyi portal dlya razmeshcheniya informatsii o razrabotke federal'nyimi organami ispolnitel'noi vlasti proyektov normativnykh pravovykh aktov i rezul'tatov ikh obshchestvennogo obsuzhdeniya’, <http://regulation.gov.ru/about.html> (accessed 29 July 2014).

all their administrative data (such as budget spending, and economic and demographic data) online.¹⁵⁹ However, the process of standardizing the availability of government data online is still underway and the accessibility of information is patchy, disorganised and confusing.¹⁶⁰ In October 2011, Dmitry Medvedev set up a platform for interaction between the government and the expert community entitled 'Big Government', which proposed to design an effective system for online governance. After a year of consultations, a Minister for Open Government was appointed to oversee the process and so far a number of pilot schemes have been launched in various regions and municipalities, as well in selected government agencies and ministries.¹⁶¹

Electronic government also enables citizens to participate in the ordering and evaluation of public services online. The *Otkrytoye Pravitel'stvo* website lists six primary benefits that the open data initiative aims to instil in the population: the somewhat cryptic 'social civic self-fulfilment' (*obshchestvennaya grazhdanskaya samorealizatsiya*), participation in governance, feedback to the authorities, influence in decision-making convenient and high-quality public services and *obshchestvennyi kontrol*.¹⁶² However, much of the website is very vague and does not explain precisely how citizens can get involved, other than through public councils.

A more concrete development for civic participation in e-governance is the Universal Electronic Card. Created in 2010, it allows citizens to pay for services and store information regarding their welfare needs electronically. According to the website, the card aims to eliminate waiting times, combat corruption and allow citizens to receive services in a convenient location (i.e., at home). It can be used to access services such as healthcare, social security, transport, as well as pay tax

¹⁵⁹ See, for instance, 'Portal Otkrytykh Danykh Permskogo Kraiya' <http://opendata.permkrai.ru/opendata/> (accessed 1 April 2014); 'Portal Otkrytykh Danykh Pravitel'stva Moskvyy', <http://data.mos.ru/> (accessed 1 April 2014); 'Otkrytye Danyye Ul'yanskoj Oblasti', <http://data.ulgov.ru/index/home/> (accessed 1 April 2014).

¹⁶⁰ Ye. Aksenova, I. Begtin, V. Burov, D. Itskovich, S. Kordonsky and A. Oslon, 'Otkrytoye Gosudarstvo', *Polit.ru*, 22 February 2012, <http://polit.ru/article/2012/02/22/open/> (accessed 1 April 2014).

¹⁶¹ 'Chto takoe otkrytoye pravitel'stvo?' *Otkrytoye Pravitel'stvo*, <http://xn--80abeamcuufxbhgound0h9cl.xn--p1ai/opengov/> (accessed 1 April 2014).

¹⁶² 'Tseli i zadachi', *Otkrytoye Pravitel'stvo*, <http://xn--80abeamcuufxbhgound0h9cl.xn--p1ai/opengov/tasks/> (accessed 1 April 2014).

and fines, and aims to encourage a self-governing attitude towards the consumption of public services.¹⁶³

Finally, the government has encouraged the online public discussion of draft laws, although the website created in order to facilitate this has been inactive since 2012.¹⁶⁴ According to the Minister of Open Government, the portal will be redesigned in the (unspecified) near future.¹⁶⁵ All these initiatives aim to inculcate a pro-active citizen who gets involved in local governance and makes intelligent and informed choices about their consumption of welfare. Since the mechanisms of electronic government are still being rolled out, it is difficult to assess how far they contribute to greater transparency and reduced corruption in government and whether they simplify the access to state welfare to citizens and encourage them to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of public services.

To conclude the discussion of post-Soviet participatory mechanisms, I have shown that as the state bureaucracy shifts away from the Soviet model to incorporate logics of streamlining, out-sourcing and consumerism, new modes of participation in governance have sprung up. As the public sector downsizes, citizens have been incorporated at each stage of the welfare process: policy formation, service delivery and service consumption. These new avenues are useful for the Russian state for three reasons. First, in a social environment in which increasing numbers of specialists now work for private or third-sector organisations instead of for the state, government departments no longer always have the expertise to develop effective responses to pressing social problems. Second, in an age of financial crisis and austerity, the involvement of third-sector organisations and citizen volunteers is more cost-efficient than the expensive, unwieldy and unresponsive government departments. Third, participatory mechanisms are even more important when, on the one hand, other channels of input, such as local elections, are being closed down and, on the other, local and regional governments have greater responsibility for making welfare decisions. In sum, the expansion of these mechanisms indicates an authoritarian response to the challenges of neoliberal public sector reform: they allow the state to harness the energy and

¹⁶³ See 'Universal'naya elektronnyaya karta', <http://www.uecard.ru/for-citizens/> (accessed 1 April 2014).

¹⁶⁴ See 'Obshchestvennoye obsuzhdeniye zakonoproektov', <http://zakonoproekt2012.ru/> (accessed 1 April 2014).

¹⁶⁵ T. Shadrina, 'Sistemu obsuzhdeniya zakonoproektov ulushat', *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 24 July 2014, <http://www.rg.ru/2014/07/24/portal-site.html> (accessed 30 July 2014).

expertise of citizens and receive feedback on policies while ensuring that the power vertical remains unchallenged. The concept of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* has been employed by the authorities to refer to the activities of civic participation in governance in an apolitical fashion.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that although there are important similarities between the state-driven mechanisms of civic participation in governance discussed in this thesis, insofar as they have all allowed a limited level of pluralism in public policy-making, contemporary mechanisms are a new phenomenon because they have arisen from the marketization of the public sector. The triple processes of outsourcing, decentralisation and privatisation have required citizens not only to monitor state activity, but also actively to participate in the fulfilment of public policy, since the state no longer considers itself the sole actor in this field. In this conclusion, I review the points of convergence and divergence between the *zemstvos*, Soviet-era mechanisms and post-Soviet bodies and summarise the importance of the concept *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* as key to understanding Kremlin's vision for civic participation in governance.

To begin with the differences between the three types of mechanisms of civic participation, it was the *zemstvos* that offered the fullest opportunities for participation, since they had powers of taxation and could formulate local welfare policy with a relatively free hand. Their powers thus extended far beyond the covert influencing of Soviet-era channels and the advisory nature of today's PCBs. While the participatory mechanisms of the Soviet period were heterogeneous – comprising the soviets, monitory bodies, trade unions and interest groups – unlike the *zemstvos* and the PCB network, they were required to conform to a strict Communist ideology. In both cases, these mechanisms were closely associated with the particular regime type in which they were created: the absolutist regime could afford citizens a relatively free hand in local governance since it was perceived as impossible that such activities could affect the authority of the Tsar; in the Soviet Union everyone was expected to help build Communism and opportunities proliferated to help them do so.

The mechanisms of contemporary Russia, while inspired by elements drawn from both eras – the *zemstvos'* focus on local governance and the Soviet mixture of assistance and oversight – are beginning to emerge as an institutionally unique,

coherent organisational network that aims to build a consensus between local authorities and citizens on public policy and service provision. The discussion in the second half of the chapter has shown that this network has been created as part of reforms of the Soviet era administrative system along market principles. However, its emergence also accompanied the reform of the electoral system, in which public participation has decreased, and the reshaping of the environment for NGOs, in which welfare-providing groups are given priority. The PCB network is thus a product of a regime characterised by the twin processes of marketization and growing authoritarianism. In other words, while each Russian governing system was characterised by varying shades of authoritarianism, the participatory structures of the present era are unique in needing to respond to the authoritarian *market* state.¹⁶⁶ Thus, while historical contextualisation is important since it allows one to appreciate the longer-term trends in institution-building, a historical analysis alone cannot account for PCBs.

However, the chapter has also shown that the autocratic Russian state has been designing novel institutions for increasing civic participation in policy formation and delivery since the mid-Nineteenth Century. In all three regimes, institutions were created because the state considered itself unable to create policy and provide welfare without the input of citizens. I have argued that in the case of the *zemstvos* and the Soviet era bodies, these institutions introduced a limited pluralism into the policy-making process, but that this pluralism was not channelled through representative democratic structures, such as elections. In the following chapter, I argue that limited pluralism is central to understanding the nature of political power in authoritarian regimes; chapters Five and Six demonstrate that PCBs continue in this tradition. In this light, PCBs represent the continuation of a governance regime that extends back 150 years to foundation of the *zemstvos* insofar as all three participatory networks allowed the state to receive input from citizens without challenging state power.

This chapter has also demonstrated the centrality of the concept of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* to practices of governance as conceived by the Kremlin, a term I explore in Chapter Four. I have argued that the practices relating to this concept combine monitoring of and assistance to the authorities and are enacted

¹⁶⁶ See also P. Rutland, 'Neoliberalism and the Russian Transition', *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 20, No. 2, (2013).

chiefly (though not exclusively) through the PCB network. Such practices respond to the governing style of the contemporary authoritarian-capitalist regime, by allowing the state to harness civic knowledge and resources as the state bureaucracy downsizes without challenging political power. I argue that the development of institutions that inculcate these practices constitutes a trend towards 'authoritarian neoliberal governance.' The following chapter explores the parameters of this concept, which I have developed in order to conceptualise the mechanisms of civic participation governance instituted by an authoritarian regime in conditions of global neoliberal capitalism.

Finally, the chapter has also shown that in both Tsarist and Soviet Russia, the expansion of mechanisms for civic participation inside the authoritarian regimes began the gradual process of consolidating an independent and sometimes critical political consciousness within those who took part. The development of this consciousness is considered to have played a major role in the downfall of both regimes. As the limited pluralism developed and consolidated inside each regime, the legitimacy of the dominant order was gradually undermined, eventually resulting in the regime's demise. Since the PCB network of Putin's Russia is at only the stage of consolidation, the question of whether it can inculcate a similar alternative political imaginary is beyond the scope of this thesis and remains to be seen.

Chapter Two: Constructing Authoritarian Neoliberal Governance

The study of the relationship between economic development and political regime has a long history. Since the 1950s, modernisation theorists have claimed that capitalist development increases chances for democracy (defined as free and fair elections, an independent judiciary and free media).¹ Yet, when applied to the case of Russia, this theory runs into difficulties. From Putin's rise to power in 2000 to the 2008 financial crash, Russia's GDP grew by approximately 7% a year,² while average incomes have doubled over the course of his presidency³ and most citizens' living standards had, by the mid-2000s, surpassed that of the Soviet era.⁴ According to modernisation theory, Russia should have been concomitantly consolidating institutions of representative democracy but, as I have discussed in the previous chapter, this has not been occurring.⁵ Like modernization theory, the present chapter starts from the assumption that economic and political regimes clearly influence one another; however, it argues that the relationship between them is more complex than a simple causal link between capitalist growth and liberal democracy. Instead, it claims that as governments increasingly rely on the private and non-profit sectors for the provision of previously state-run services, new participatory mechanisms for citizens are needed, since the state is no longer the main source of expertise in vital public policy fields. In other words, non-electoral consultative and participatory mechanisms proliferate as public sectors are marketized.

The previous chapter has shown that in the last ten years, as the Soviet state bureaucracy has gradually been reformed, many new participatory mechanisms

¹ See, for instance, S. Lipset, 'Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy' *American Political Science Review*, 53, 1 (1959); D. Rueschemeyer, E. Stephens, and J. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 11; A. Przeworski, M. Alvarez, J. Cheibub and F. Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); D. Epstein, R. Bates, J. Goldstone, I. Kristensen and S. O'Halloren, 'Democratic Transitions,' *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (2006).

² Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, pp. 285.

³ Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, pp. 313.

⁴ S. Pirani, *Change in Putin's Russia: Power, Money and People* (London: Pluto Press, 2010) pp. 48.

⁵ See also A. Brown, 'From Democratization to "Guided Democracy"', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 12, No. 4, (October 2001); Steven M. Fish, *Democracy Derailed in Russia: The Failure of Open Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

have been introduced by the Kremlin. Why have these mechanisms received such little scholarly attention in the case of Russia? And why have studies that do mention them, mostly derided them as ‘undemocratic’? I argue in this chapter that there has been a fixation on questions of democratisation and elections in Western scholarly literature on Russia, defined with the institutions of liberal democracy as a normative ideal. As a result, new modes of participation in political decision-making and governance that depart from this model have either been missed or dismissed. With the goal of understanding the substantive institutional architecture through which authoritarian rule is sustained in Russia, this thesis explores the conditions of emergence of such bodies and examines the kind of practices they inculcate in their members. It argues that they are a product of both the marketization of the Soviet-era public sector and the diminishing opportunity for the state to receive feedback from the public through existing mechanisms, such as elections, and demonstrates that they cannot be dismissed merely as Potemkin villages or ‘decorative’ bodies as they can and do influence state policy. Therefore, instead of using theories of democratization – which would simply disregard these mechanisms as anti-constitutional aberrations – I use the notion of ‘authoritarian neoliberal governance’ in order to capture the way in which the authorities are attempting to open up the burgeoning Soviet state to a limited plurality of voices.

In this chapter, I construct the concept of ‘authoritarian neoliberal governance’ through a discussion of its component parts, which I separate into three eponymous sections. I begin with an analysis of the neoliberal conception of the state which, despite a proclaimed normative commitment to a ‘small state’, has resulted in the growth of state-run bureaucratic structures that guarantee market conditions across many areas of public policy formation and delivery. The steering of these structures, together with third party providers and citizens themselves, has been captured by the concept of ‘governance’, which I discuss in the second section. Focussing on the role of citizens in governance, I show that the growth of mechanisms enabling their participation in decision-making processes has risen in countries around the world; however, most studies have interpreted them using various aspects of democratic theory. I argue that, in order to conceptualise the rise of such bodies in non-democratic regimes such as contemporary Russia, the concept of neoliberal governance must be qualified by the term ‘authoritarian’, which indicates the state-controlled and selective fashion in which they operate. Thus, in

the final section I give an account of authoritarianism drawn from Juan Linz's pioneering work and argue that the feature of 'limited pluralism', central to authoritarian regimes, captures the state-managed nature of Russia's PCBs. The chapter aims to demonstrate that the concept of 'authoritarian neoliberal governance' is useful for understanding how global norms relating to the opening up of the state to include non-state voices in the process of policy formation have been adapted by authoritarian states to produce institutions which simultaneously enable and constrain civic participation in governance.

Neoliberalizing the State

The concept of neoliberalism is divisive and hard to define, being used to refer to a panoply of – at times contrasting – practices around the world. Emerging during the interwar years in the Universities of Vienna and Cambridge as a political 'imaginary'⁶ promoting a radical form of individualism in response to the perceived collectivism behind the rise of Socialism, Fascism and social democracy across Europe,⁷ it was rolled out as policy in the Anglophone world in the 1970s and 1980s most notably by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan who saw the roots of the 1973-75 recession in the welfare state and in Keynesian economics.⁸ Today, the word is eschewed by policy-makers and politicians who seek to distance themselves from its negative connotations but is used in abundance in critical social science.⁹ Neoliberal policy has acquired a vast army of critics around the world who perceive it as the cause of numerous contemporary social and political ills, from environmental degradation and economic inequality to erosions in civil liberties and the takeover of democratic institutions by corporate lobbying.¹⁰ This section defines and delimits the area of neoliberal policy that is the focus of this thesis – the restructuring of the state bureaucracy to include market principles. It argues that practices of neoliberal restructuring manifest themselves differently in different

⁶ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 13.

⁷ D. Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 329; J. Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.71

⁸ C. Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), pp. 16; Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*, pp. 70.

⁹ Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*, pp. 14.

¹⁰ W. Brown, 'Neo-Liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy', *Theory and Event*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (2003); H. Giroux, *The Terror of Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy* (Boulder, CA: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), pp. xiii-xx; Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 12; Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*, pp. 14.

geographical contexts and, in order to understand them, it is necessary to focus on the legitimating discourse of the state implementing them.

While the concept of neoliberalism has its foundations in the sphere of economics, its application has far-reaching ramifications for social and political organisation. As I discuss in more detail below, it is in studying its application in various contexts that can provide the most insight into its meaning. Nonetheless, the concept can be considered from three interlinked perspectives: ideological, economic and state-oriented (or political).¹¹ The ideological perspective has been characterised by David Harvey as a conviction that the free hand of the market is the best mechanism through which to resolve all social problems and consequently that state functions should be scaled back to allow markets to form in their place.¹² He has argued that, given its propensity to redistribute wealth from the poor to the privileged, neoliberalism is in fact a conscious project to restore class elites (in the case of Britain and the US) or to create conditions for the (re-) emergence of class (in Russia, China, India and elsewhere).¹³

The economic aspect refers to a set of policies that duly seek to embed financial principles into areas formerly outside the market. These principles have been summarised by Birch and Mykhnenko into five points:

privatization of state-run assets (firms, council housing *et cetera*); *liberalization* of trade in goods and capital investment; *monetarist* focus on inflation control and supply-side dynamics; *deregulation* of labour and product markets to reduce 'impediments' to business; and, the *marketization* of society through public–private partnerships and other forms of commodification.¹⁴

The requirement to adopt these policies has been attached as a condition to loans by global financial institutions to post-colonial, authoritarian and post-socialist

¹¹ K. Birch and V. Mykhnenko, 'Introduction' in K. Birch and V. Mykhnenko, (eds.), *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberalism: The Collapse of an Economic Order?* (London: Z Books, 2010), pp. 2.

¹² D. Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 20; see also Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe*, pp. 331 and Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*, pp. 20.

¹³ D. Harvey, 'Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 610, NAFTA and Beyond: Alternative Perspectives in the Study of Global Trade and Development, (March, 2007).

¹⁴ Birch, and Mykhnenko, *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberalism*, pp. 5.

countries and have been implemented with varying degrees of ‘success’ (with Chile, Singapore and Poland considered model examples). As such, studies have proliferated of the uptake and permutations of these principles in different geographical contexts around the world.¹⁵

The political dimension of neoliberalism is the starting point of this thesis and highlights the roles of the state as facilitator of domestic conditions amenable to the above-mentioned economic principles¹⁶ and guarantor of the negative freedoms of the individual.¹⁷ Such a role implies a transformation of the state’s welfare-providing institutions from ones that provide goods and services directly to citizens to ones that tender contracts between government agencies and third party service-providers (be they private companies or not-for-profit NGOs) and oversee their delivery. It thus implies a significant reconceptualization of the role of the welfare state – that is, the domestic framework of social provision to citizens – from one based on the idea that welfare is a public good to one that considers it a private responsibility. Characterising the difference between a ‘traditional’ or social democratic welfare state and a neoliberal welfare state, Raymond Plant sets out two ideal types, stating that ‘in a [traditional] welfare state... the state seeks to secure to individuals access to or possession of certain sorts of real resources such as health, education, the services of social workers, etc.’¹⁸ By contrast, the neoliberal welfare state,

Is not inspired by social justice; it is limited in scope; it is not designed to change relative positions of individuals and groups within society; it embodies a view of negative liberty; it is compatible only with a set of negative rights; it does not seek the achievement of specific ends such as social justice or social solidarity...; it operates with a modest level of bureaucracy; and it

¹⁵ See, for instance, E. Dunn, *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business and the Re-making of Labor* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004); L. Manzetti, *Neoliberalism, Accountability and Reform Failures in Emerging Markets: Eastern Europe, Russia, Argentina and Chile in Comparative Perspective* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2009); E. Steinfeld, *Forging Reform in China: The Fate of State-Owned Industry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); K. Weyland, *The Politics of Market Reform in Fragile Democracies: Argentina, Peru, Brazil and Venezuela* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

¹⁶ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, pp. 2; see also Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe*, pp. 335; P. Bourdieu, ‘The Essence of Neoliberalism’, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, December 1998, <http://mondediplo.com/1998/12/08bourdieu>, (accessed 17 March 2014).

¹⁷ R. Plant, *The Neo-Liberal State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 38

¹⁸ Plant, *The Neo-Liberal State*, pp. 139.

is not involved in the direct provision of welfare itself but is limited to a funding and a commissioning role.¹⁹

In other words, the neoliberal public sector is considered by its advocates both to be based on a set of less normative principles (i.e. an absence of destitution rather than the pursuit of social justice) and to be smaller, less bureaucratic and therefore more efficient. However, these two perceived advantages are frequently contradicted in practice, for the broader neoliberal agenda is founded on a belief in the superiority of markets in the distribution of social goods (as discussed above) and is therefore also highly normative and the substantial institutional framework required to produce the neoliberal welfare state contradicts the core stipulation of minimal bureaucracy. I now consider this second point in more detail.

Numerous scholars have pointed out that ensuring the unfettered operation of the market requires the development of important state arbitration mechanisms and regulatory apparatus and activity.²⁰ This indicates a tension at the heart of the neoliberal conception of the state: on the one hand, it claims that the state is inefficient, expensive and bureaucratic and, therefore, needs to be 'rolled back' to allow more flexible, efficient and innovative private companies or non-profits to fill the gap. On the other hand, the state's role remains central in practice as it 'rolls out' its new functions as guarantor of market conditions, arbiter of partnerships between the public and private sectors, and funder of service-providing organisations. (Indeed, this has led some to suggest that an 'authoritarian' government in fact better guarantees market conditions since neoliberal policies of social austerity, outsourcing and flexible labour are inherently unpopular with electorates.²¹) Jamie Peck argues that 'roll back' is manifested in policies of 'funding cuts, organizational down-sizing, market testing and privatization' and occurs prior to the 'roll out' phase which consists of measures that then attempt to control or

¹⁹ Plant, *The Neo-Liberal State*, pp. 250.

²⁰ Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe*, pp. 334; N. Flynn, *Public Sector Management*, 5th Edition, (London: Sage, 2007), pp. 204; Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*, pp.23; J. Pierre and B. Guy Peters, *Governance, Politics and the State* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 2000), pp. 25.

²¹ I. Bruff, 'The Rise of Authoritarian Neoliberalism', *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol. 26, No. 1, (2013); Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberalism*, pp. 110; see also E. Swyngedouw, 'Authoritarian Governance, Power, and the Politics of Rescaling', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (2000).

mitigate the effects of 'roll back'.²² He highlights the dynamic between policies of 'roll back' and 'roll out' by listing various examples that are useful to quote in full:

Privatization of public utilities, like water and communications, leading to a need to extend regulatory oversight, in the face of system failures, private monopoly abuses, and legitimacy problems; social service cutbacks in fields such as public housing and subsidized food being partially backfilled through new non-entitlement services, delivered by non-profit or private providers; overreach in trade liberalization or financial deregulation, in cases of marked economic dislocation or market failure, being followed by exceptions-to-the-rule "deals" and regulatory "corrections".²³

Thus, while the predilection for a small state exists very much in ideological justifications for advancing neoliberal agendas, the successful implementation of neoliberal economic principles requires a substantially altered, but certainly not smaller, state apparatus.

Innovative institutional mechanisms that respond to the consequences of roll back have been developed by the governments of countries requiring loans after economists in global financial institutions imposed a neoliberal conditionality requiring the privatisation and deregulation of their public sectors.²⁴ Such mechanisms are produced from pre-existing legal frameworks and political regimes, which themselves are deeply culturally specific. Thus, the structure of neoliberal state bureaucracy varies substantially in different socio-political contexts and produces a large diversity of practices associated with neoliberalism. This means that neoliberalism cannot be seen as a single, unified, hegemonic system, but rather as a fluid and mutating assemblage of norms, values and policies, which manifests itself differently in different cultural and political settings.²⁵ For instance, the

²² Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*, pp.22.

²³ Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*, pp.23.

²⁴ See E. Van Waeyenberge, 'Chapter Five: Tightening the Web: The World Bank and Enforced Policy Reform' in Birch and Mykhnenko, *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberalism*, pp. 94; Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, pp. 5; A. Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 14. Harvey, 'Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction'.

²⁵ See A. Gamble, in R. Robison, (ed.), *The Neoliberal Revolution: Forging the Market State* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), pp. 34; Harvey, 'Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction'; K. Birch and V. Mykhnenko, 'Varieties of Neoliberalisms? Restructuring in Large Industrially Dependent Regions Across Western and Eastern Europe', *Journal of Economic Geography*, Vol. 9,

Thatcherism of 1980s Britain varies dramatically from contemporary China's articulation of neoliberal principles, though both can be said to combine market logic with a strong state.²⁶

With this in mind, numerous scholars have proposed a revision and refinement of the way in which neoliberalism is studied. Peck has argued for an understanding of neoliberalisation as process rather than neoliberalism as fixed and universalizable doctrine, claiming that 'concretely grounded accounts of the process' provide greater indication of what neoliberalisation means to diverse polities.²⁷ Birch and Mykhnenko have argued for the differentiation between 'neoliberal (as ideology), neoliberalism (as state strategy) and neoliberalisation (as process).'²⁸ They claim that a global neoliberal ideology committed to an expansion of the free market has been reproduced as state strategy in various countries to different extents and for different reasons, producing 'national varieties of neoliberalisms.'²⁹ Aihwa Ong has highlighted the ways in which neoliberalism as 'techniques of governing' can be 'decontextualised' from its point of origin and 'recontextualised' in networks of unpredictable relationships.³⁰ Numerous others have employed the term 'glocalization' to refer to the dialectically related processes of diversification and homogenization of social practices in specific locales that result from the restructuring of financial strategies, governance levels or cultural norms both upwards from the national to the supra-national and downwards to the local or even individual levels.³¹ Taken together, this body of research strongly suggests that national-level articulations of neoliberal policies are unlikely to be straightforward reproductions of those advanced by international financial institutions and other transnational bodies. Instead, studies must focus on how neoliberal policies are operationalised in local settings. In this vein, Bob Jessop has argued,

(January 2009); K. Birch and V. Mykhnenko, (eds.), *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberalism: The Collapse of an Economic Order* (London: Zed Books, 2010), pp. 1; Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*, pp. 7; Rutland, 'Neoliberalism and the Russian Transition'.

²⁶ Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberalism*, pp. 9.

²⁷ Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberalism*, pp. 16.

²⁸ Birch and Mykhnenko, 'Varieties of Neoliberalisms?'

²⁹ Birch and Mykhnenko, 'Varieties of Neoliberalisms?'

³⁰ Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception*, pp. 13.

³¹ E. Swyngedouw, 'Globalisation or "Glocalisation"? Networks, Territories and Rescaling', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 1. (2004); R. Robertson, 'Chapter 2: 'Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity and Heterogeneity'', in M. Featherstone, S. Lash and R. Robertson, *Global Modernities* (London: Sage, 1995).

Although neoliberal projects are being pursued on many different and often tangled scales, it is in cities and city-regions that the various contradictions and tensions of “actually existing neoliberalism”... are expressed most saliently in everyday life.³²

In Chapters Five and Six, I explore the practices of PCBs as manifestations of authoritarian neoliberal governance in three Russian cities.

In order to understand domestic processes of neoliberalisation and to account for the vast cross-country variations in the practices associated with it, the task becomes to uncover the factors that condition and shape the ways in which these processes are manifested at the domestic level and the extents to which they are incorporated, challenged or modulated by local actors. Birch and Mykhnenko argue that since neoliberalisation is a state-driven project, individual state strategy (understood as a government-designed programme for national development) and the motivation and rationale behind it is key to understanding regional variations. Their work shows how neoliberal policies are packaged by states in attractive or euphemistic legitimating discourses, which tailor policies to their specific socio-political contexts or cultural narratives. They have examined how the concepts of a ‘knowledge-based economy’ in Western Europe and ‘de-industrialisation’ in East-Central Europe have been used to promote the same neoliberal ideas of institutional restructuring and flexible labour markets across states with very different domestic settings, and producing different outcomes.³³ Following their lead, I therefore consider Russian processes of neoliberalisation as hybridized reproductions of global neoliberal policies rearticulated through the country’s particular state strategy and discourses. This thesis considers PCBs as a neoliberal roll out mechanism that aims to mitigate the loss of expertise by the state as its monopoly on service provision has been rolled back. The following chapter shows how the contemporary Russian state-driven discourse of *obshchestvennyi kontrol*, which combines familiar Soviet-era language with the new language of international competitiveness, have been employed to legitimise the emergence. I now consider how the neoliberal restructuring of the state necessitates the creation of mechanisms that enable civic participation in governance.

³² B. Jessop, ‘Liberalism, Neoliberalism and Urban Governance: A State-Theoretical Perspective’, *Antipode*, Vol. 34, No. 3, (July 2002).

³³ Birch and Mykhnenko, ‘Varieties of Neoliberalisms?’.

From Government to Governance?

Like 'neoliberalism', 'governance' is a highly contested concept and has been criticized as vague and apolitical.³⁴ It can be used both to highlight the new ways in which the state asserts and retains control in an increasingly decentralised, post-Fordist environment³⁵ and to indicate the ways in which communities collectively self-organise to resolve common problems outside of the state.³⁶ Further, it is used to capture a diverse array of institutional practices at the local, national, regional and global levels and thus is often qualified with an adjective to indicate a particular level or sphere. For instance, domestic models of public sector management advocated by international institutions are known as 'good governance'; the management norms adhered to by big business are referred to as 'corporate governance'; international co-operative problem-solving arrangements are conceived as 'global governance'; and the networks through which domestic public policy is formulated and delivered are known as 'public governance'.³⁷ In this thesis, I am concerned with the last of these: this chapter aims to present a model of 'authoritarian neoliberal governance', a form of public governance that responds to the neoliberalization of the public sector in authoritarian regimes. This section claims that an important feature of the move towards public governance in a neoliberal era is the creation of mechanisms that include citizens in policy-making processes and argues for a framework that conceptualises this development in non-democratic countries.

R.A.W. Rhodes, one of the key voices in the field, has stated that 'governance' refers to 'the changing boundaries between public, private and voluntary sectors, and to the changing role of the state'.³⁸ He applies this conceptualisation to governance of the public sector, elaborating four principles that define this sphere: first, interdependence between organisations, including state and non-state actors, that formulate and deliver policy; second, on-going interactions among these networks due to the need to share information and resources; third, these interactions are 'game-like', since they are based on shared

³⁴ C. Offe, 'Governance: An Empty Signifier?', *Constellations*, Vol. 16, No. 4, (2009).

³⁵ Pierre and Guy Peters, *Governance, Politics and the State*, pp. 94.

³⁶ Pierre and Guy Peters, *Governance, Politics and the State*, pp. 21.

³⁷ R.A.W. Rhodes, 'Understanding Governance: 10 Years On', *Organization Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 8, (2007).

³⁸ R.A.W. Rhodes, 'Chapter Three: Waves of Governance' in Levi-Faur, D., (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 33.

rules; and, fourth, the networks are self-organising and not accountable to the state, although they can be indirectly steered by the state.³⁹ The concept of public governance thus begins with the assumption that the three administrative trends of, first, the devolution of service provision to lower levels of government, second, the privatisation, deregulation and outsourcing of public goods and services and, third, the formation of state-non-state partnerships, have reduced the state's monopoly on the necessary information to make and deliver public policy. Policy networks and other 'innovations in governing' have been developed in order to collate the information and expertise required for policy decisions that is now distributed among third sector organisations and private companies.⁴⁰ Governance, then, highlights new methods of rule that comprise more horizontal networks of diverse organisations, thereby eroding more traditional, hierarchical forms of political power. It implies increased levels of pluralism and civic participation in decision-making processes and service provision.⁴¹ To refer to the discussion in the previous section, it captures the mechanisms and processes through which the policies of 'roll out' are developed, executed and managed collaboratively.

Ideas about public governance have evolved substantially over the past thirty years. The concept was introduced into discussions about public sector reform during the 1980s as market mechanisms were incorporated into the state bureaucracy in some Western countries.⁴² A particular strategy called New Public Management (NPM) was utilised to steer the transformation of the state bureaucracy away from the so-called progressive public administration (PPA) of the mid-20th Century, a governing strategy that had been characterised by a statist and bureaucratic method of welfare delivery (and whose most extreme form was the Soviet welfare state).⁴³ By contrast, NPM was based on the assumption that the introduction of principles drawn from the private sector would make the public sector more efficient. These principles included decentralisation, outsourcing, competition

³⁹ Rhodes, 'Understanding Governance'.

⁴⁰ C. Koliba, J. Meek A. and Zia, *Governance Networks in Public Administration and Public Policy* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2011), pp. 15; T. Christensen and P. Lægreid, (eds.), *Transcending New Public Management: The Transformation of Public Sector Reforms* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 13.

⁴¹ Koliba, Meek and Zia, *Governance Networks in Public Administration and Public Policy*, pp. 25.

⁴² Koliba, Meek and Zia, *Governance Networks in Public Administration and Public Policy*, pp. 17.

⁴³ C. Hood, 'The "New Public Management" in the 1980s: Variations on a Theme', *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 2-3, (1995); S. Osbourne, (ed.), *The New Public Governance? Emerging Perspectives on the Theory and Practice of Public Governance* (Oxford: Routledge, 2010), pp. 4.

among government agencies, the appointment of high-profile executive managers to head government departments and the reconceptualization of the citizen as a consumer of welfare services.⁴⁴ Areas that were formerly seen as the preserve of government, such as health and social care, education and public order, were now considered broader social problems to be dealt with by a variety of actors, including both state and non-state institutions (recall, for instance, the diversity of stakeholders mentioned in Russia's Federal Law 'On the Police' discussed on page 66). In other words, NPM attempted the neoliberalisation of the public sector.⁴⁵ Although NPM is seen as a broadly global trend, it has been noted that different countries 'have different starting points, are at different stages of reform and face different internal and external constraints.'⁴⁶ The post-Soviet administrative reforms discussed in the previous chapter can be considered as a Russian articulation of the broader international trend towards NPM.⁴⁷

More recently, scholars have argued that the movement towards NPM is now either over or in decline in the countries that lead the trends in global public administration reform. On this view, NPM was merely a transitional phase towards other forms of public policy implementation that seek to overcome the fragmentation in policy formation and delivery wrought by policies of NPM. These new forms have been characterised as a 'whole-of-government'⁴⁸ approach, 'digital-era governance'⁴⁹ and 'New Public Governance'.⁵⁰ While each focuses on slightly different aspects of post-NPM governance, the overall aim is to transcend the 'administration versus management' dichotomy, evidenced in the debate between

⁴⁴ Hood, 'The "New Public Management" in the 1980s'; E. Ferlie, L. Ashburner, L. Fitzgerald and A. Pettigrew, *The New Public Management in Action*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 6-9.

⁴⁵ Christensen and Lægreid, *Transcending New Public Management*, pp. 4; see also B. Jessop, 'The Rise of Governance and the Risks of Failure: The Case of Economic Development', *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 50, Issue 155, (March 1998).

⁴⁶ Christensen and Lægreid, *Transcending New Public Management*, pp. 9.

⁴⁷ See Christensen and Lægreid, *Transcending New Public Management*, pp. 5; for NPM in Russian higher education see N. Forrat, 'Global Trends or Regime Survival? The Reforms in Russian Higher Education', Comparative-Historical Social Science (CHSS) Working Paper Series, The Roberta Buffett Center for International and Comparative Studies, February 2012, available at: <http://www.bcics.northwestern.edu/documents/workingpapers/CHSS-12-001-Forrat.pdf> (accessed 5 August 2014).

⁴⁸ Christensen and Lægreid, *Transcending New Public Management*, pp. 25; Koliba, Meek and Zia, *Governance Networks in Public Administration and Public Policy*, pp. 22.

⁴⁹ P. Dunleavy, H. Margetts, S. Bastow and J. Tinkler, 'New Public Management is Dead – Long Live Digital-Era Governance', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Vol. 16, No. 3, (2006).

⁵⁰ See L. Lynn, 'Chapter 7: What Endures? Public Governance and the Cycle of Reform' in Osbourne, *The New Public Governance?*, pp. 110.

defenders of PPA and those of NPM and to adopt a more holistic approach to governance while maintaining a market logic.⁵¹ In other words, it attempts to rectify perceived shortcomings of NPM without challenging its neoliberal basis. Governance is an important concept in both approaches to public administration: in NPM, it refers to the creation of networks of increasing numbers of actors involved in policy making and delivery; in the post-NMP conceptions it refers to the reform of the governance networks created under NMP. In short, it is virtually impossible to consider public administration in the neoliberal era without considering governance networks.

Several scholars have already examined practices of governance in various countries through the lens of neoliberalism, though to date these studies have focussed on liberal democracies. For instance, in his cross-national study, Mike Geddes has delineated three tendencies in the shift from government to governance that appear in northern, eastern and southern European countries as well as the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand, arguing that a 'cross-national convergence' in governance practices is taking place.⁵² These tendencies are, first, the declining role of the public sector, both in service provision and in local politics; second, a shift from the role of the state in the redistribution of wealth across society to a greater emphasis on individual entrepreneurship and responsibility and; third, an increase in partnerships between local government and private or voluntary sector organisations as sites for government decision-making. He argues that 'neoliberalism is the essential context in which to understand the shift towards local governance.'⁵³ Similarly, Bas Denters and Lawrence Rose have noted in their study of local governance trends in 15 established democracies that a shift from local government towards local governance is an 'international phenomenon'⁵⁴ which can be characterised along three broad lines: first, the growth of public-private partnerships; second, the inclusion of non-state actors (business and non-profit) in

⁵¹ O. Hughes, *Public Management and Administration: An Introduction*, 3rd Edition, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), pp. 6-8.

⁵² M. Geddes, 'Neoliberalism and Local Governance: Cross-National Perspectives and Speculations', *Policy Studies*, Vol. 26, Nos. 3/4 (2005).

⁵³ Geddes, 'Neoliberalism and Local Governance'.

⁵⁴ B. Denters and L. Rose, 'Chapter 15: Towards Local Governance?' in B. Denters and L. Rose, (eds.), *Comparing Local Governance: Trends and Developments* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), pp. 261.

policy processes; third, the proliferation of new modes of civic engagement, although specifics in these instances vary widely across the case studies.⁵⁵

Important for the present work is the tendency towards increased involvement of citizens in decision-making processes. As indicated by these two studies, the shift from government to governance also implies a change in the relationship between citizens and the authorities, producing greater levels of participation by the former in policy-making and service provision.⁵⁶ Two primary factors have led to this change. First, since citizens are now considered 'consumers', rather than mere recipients, of goods and services, they must be able to make rational and informed choices about their needs.⁵⁷ This requires an education or socialisation into the various welfare options on the part of citizens and, as citizens become more knowledgeable of their welfare needs, this knowledge has to be accessed by policy-makers to ensure welfare options are developed that meet those needs. Second, given that the government is no longer the primary source of expertise in service delivery – as private companies and/or voluntary sector organisations now operate primarily on the front line – the inclusion of citizens and non-state service providers in the policy process has become necessary in order to fill the inevitable knowledge gap. Taking these factors together, John Pierre and B. Guy Peters have argued that,

If they are to be successful in governing, democracies will have to devise means of accommodating more continuous forms of participation, while still being able to supply the needed direction to society.⁵⁸

And, indeed, new *fora* have proliferated through which non-state 'experts' can provide input into areas once the preserve of government in areas which affect them, creating new forms of civic engagement.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Denters and Rose, *Comparing Local Governance*, pp. 261.

⁵⁶ Pierre, and Guy Peters, *Governance, Politics and the State*, pp. 4.

⁵⁷ J. Clarke, J. Newman, N. Smith, E. Vidler and L. Westmarland, *Creating Citizen Consumers: Changing Public and Changing Public Services* (London: Sage, 2007); Flynn, *Public Sector Management*, pp. 204; A. Massey and R. Pyper, *Public Management and Modernisation in Britain* (London: Palgrave MacMillan 2005), pp. 105.

⁵⁸ Pierre and Guy Peters, *Governance Politics and the State*, pp. 4.

⁵⁹ See E. Swyngedouw, 'Governance Innovation and the Citizen: The Janus Face of Governance-Beyond-the-State', *Urban Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 11, (October 2005).

There have been various attempts to characterise this shift in the nature of public participation in recent years. John Keane has labelled the many new ways in which citizens can engage in governance as 'monitory democracy', that is, the extension of mechanisms of public accountability, scrutiny and contestation to increasingly diverse spheres of social life, running parallel to the conventional, constitutional democratic institutions such as political parties, elections and parliament. According to Keane, after 1945, democracy grew to become globally accepted as the standard form of the domestic organisation of political power, but its adoption in different cultural contexts facilitated the proliferation of many different understandings of what democracy should entail and, thus, many different institutions claiming to promote democratic norms.⁶⁰ In what could be easily applied to the Russian case, he writes, 'In the name of "people", "the public", "public accountability", "the people" or "citizens"... power-monitoring institutions spring up all over the place.'⁶¹ For Keane, the reason for this lies with increasing public concern with matters formerly thought to be non-political (such as energy or environmental concerns), as well as the rise in communications media, networked governance (the delegation of decision-making across numerous, potentially conflicting, institutions). Monitory institutions, which range from municipal-level forums such as citizens' assemblies and focus groups to global initiatives such as online petitions, think tanks and conferences, have three factors in common: first, they aim to provide citizens with a 'diversity of viewpoints'⁶² regarding the exercise of power in particular institutions; second, they promote 'public definition, public scrutiny and public enforcement of standards and rule'⁶³ in the prevention of corruption; third, they give citizens greater opportunities to voice their concerns on issues that affect their daily lives.

A second attempt to characterise the changing nature of political participation has been made by Frank Vibert. He has explored the expansion of 'bodies in society that exercise official authority but are not headed by elected politicians and have been deliberately set apart, or only loosely tied to the more familiar elected

⁶⁰ J. Keane, *The Life and Death of Democracy* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2009), pp. 676.

⁶¹ J. Keane, 'Monitory Democracy?', Paper prepared for the ESRC Seminar Series, 'Emergent Publics', The Open University, Milton Keynes, 13th-14th March 2008, available at http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/emergentpublics/seminar1/keane_monitory_democracy.pdf (accessed 23 February 2014).

⁶² Keane, 'Monitory Democracy?'.
⁶³ Keane, 'Monitory Democracy?'.
⁶³ Keane, 'Monitory Democracy?'.

institutions of democracy.'⁶⁴ Such bodies range from service providers and risk assessors to auditors and whistle-blowers, each with the capacity significantly to affect decision-making processes.⁶⁵ Citing globalisation as a general background factor in the proliferation of unelected bodies by opening up government to an increasing number of external influences, Vibert details three lenses through which to view this phenomenon. First, NPM has meant that government has come to be seen as a service in itself and thus requires various mediatory institutions in order to regulate the delivery of its services. Second, a distinction has formed between the development and management of policy and its delivery, the former to be performed by government departments and the latter to be delegated to specialised third parties. However, his preferred explanation is that the development of these bodies signals a 'new separation of powers' consisting of 'a division between the empirical judgements underlying a policy and the political judgements.'⁶⁶ Thus, he sees unelected bodies as an intrinsic part of governance, one that can be reconciled with democratic theory since informed and critical citizens, mistrustful of government information sources, can turn instead to experts 'untainted by the machinery of government'.⁶⁷

Both of these approaches contain useful insights for the Russian case, although their ultimate reliance on aspects of democratic theory led me to search elsewhere for an explanatory framework. In the case of Keane, his characterisation of citizen participation as a 'wholly new era of grass-roots democracy, arriving after 1945 as the era of representative democracy drew to a close' certainly chimes with Vladimir Putin's call for a new kind of Russian democracy (*narodovlastiye*), discussed in the following chapter.⁶⁸ However, I considered his framework inappropriate to characterise the type of citizen participation wrought by Russia's PCBs for two reasons. First, he does not include public sector reform as an explanatory factor, which, as I have shown in Chapter One, is a central driver for the development of PCBs. Second, Keane's theory explains the desire of citizens to participate in local politics, not the desire of the state to harness civic agency, the subject of the present thesis.

⁶⁴ F. Vibert, *The Rise of the Unelected: Democracy and the New Separation of Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 4.

⁶⁵ Vibert, *The Rise of the Unelected*, pp. 20.

⁶⁶ Vibert, *The Rise of the Unelected*, pp. 38.

⁶⁷ Vibert, *The Rise of the Unelected*, pp. 13.

⁶⁸ Keane, *The Life and Death of Democracy*, pp. 688.

Vibert, by contrast, cited the marketization of the public sector as a background factor in the proliferation of participatory mechanisms developing adjacent, and only partially accountable, to the state. For him, such bodies comprise a fourth column in the separation of powers necessary to hold increasingly complex systems of government to account. I show in Chapters Five and Six that many respondents envisage this kind of system for PCBs; however, the current reality is that PCBs do not hold government accountable for their decisions, since authorities retain substantial control over both the membership and the agenda. Rather, they occasionally enable citizens to participate in decision-making. They are thus considerably less useful for representative democracy than the bodies that are the subject of Vibert's study. Finally, and most importantly, in my view, as discussed in the previous chapter, Russia is not 'democratising' and to explain PCBs with reference to democratic theory presumes a development trajectory that is simply not occurring in practice. Furthermore, as I show in the following chapter, increased civic participation in governance is not legitimated by a discourse of democracy and to represent it as such would be to misunderstand its intended functions. Instead it is presented in economic terms as a means to increase the country's international competitiveness in the global market. Therefore, a framework that does not rely on democratic theory is needed to interpret state-driven mechanisms of civic participation in regimes that do not legitimate their policy decisions with reference to democracy.

So far in this chapter I have argued that the marketization of the state bureaucracy is a broad, global phenomenon and that the creation of participatory mechanisms is a central feature thereof. However, I have also argued that this process is enacted differently and for different reasons in different political and cultural contexts. In the case of Russia, the government has used a legitimating narrative of patriotism and economic competitiveness (discussed in the following chapter) in creating participatory mechanisms, and has imposed certain limits to this participation in terms of the role that such institutions are intended to play in Russian politics and the kinds of groups and individuals who may participate. Therefore, the governance framework alone is not enough to capture the distinct nature of citizen involvement in governance offered by PCBs in Russia's non-democratic regime. Something more is needed to account for the ways in which governance mechanisms are controlled and constrained in non-democratic polities. Therefore, I

have chosen to qualify it with the ubiquitous but not unproblematic term, 'authoritarian'. This decision warrants some justification.

Authoritarian Neoliberal Governance

Like 'neoliberalism' and 'governance', the body of literature on non-democratic regimes is huge and has been approached from many different theoretical perspectives. Paul Brooker has grouped them into three categories relating to questions of 'who rules?', 'how do they rule?' and 'why do they rule?'.⁶⁹ The first of these is seen to be the 'traditional regime-defining question' and includes analyses of the types of institutions or individuals operating at the seat of power, such as military regimes, one-party states and monarchical or personal rule.⁷⁰ The second pertains to analyses of the level and methods of control attained by various regimes, as well as their specific policies, while the third category – the 'why' question – includes analyses of the ways in which rulers make claims to legitimacy, such as ideologies and the use of elections.⁷¹ Here I focus on the second question, and draw upon the regime classificatory system in order to answer it. This system attempts to characterise political regimes around the world for comparative analysis, based on the core concepts of democracy, authoritarianism and totalitarianism (a concept considered by some to have lost analytical purchase⁷²) and modifications thereof. On this system, Russia has most frequently been termed not authoritarian, but a hybrid regime. In what follows below, I examine three strands of work on hybridity and argue that my use of 'authoritarian' is compatible with those approaches that view hybridity as a product of the interactions between two distinct 'democratic' and 'authoritarian' systems operating simultaneously inside a single regime. I thus interrogate the nature of Russia's authoritarian system through an elaboration of Juan Linz's presentation of authoritarianism as limited pluralism. This conception, I argue, captures how civic participation in governance is channelled and regulated by the state.

⁶⁹ P. Brooker, *Non-Democratic Regimes*, 2nd Edition, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), pp. 14-15, 16-17.

⁷⁰ Brooker, *Non-Democratic Regimes*, pp. 16.

⁷¹ See also J. Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁷² J. Connelly, 'Totalitarianism: Defunct Theory, Useful Word', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Fall 2010); Brooker, *Non-Democratic Regimes*, pp. 22.

There are three main strands to work on hybridity. First, there are those who view it in residual terms as existing somewhere along a continuum between democracy and authoritarianism, where the latter is defined as an absence of the former. Second, there are those who view it as a corruption of democratic institutions and practices. Third, there are those who view hybridity as a *sui generis* category, produced through ongoing interactions between democratic and authoritarian tendencies within a regime, each of which have their own functional logics and institutions. Scholars in the first category aim to measure the extent to which democratic institutions are present and functional; those in the second category focus on elections as key sites in which authoritarian strategies are played out; while those in the third category analyse the practices, institutions and policies produced by the interactions between the opposing forces.

Most of the works in the first category initially shared the assumption that, after the Soviet regime collapsed, Russia was transitioning towards democracy. However, by the mid-2000s, as consensus was reached that this is not in fact the case, studies of this type have concluded that it now lies part way between democracy and authoritarianism and can thus be termed a 'hybrid' regime.⁷³ For instance, Thomas Carothers has described such regimes as being located in a 'political grey zone,'⁷⁴ while Marina Ottaway describes hybridity as a regime type which 'occupies the space between authoritarianism at one end and consolidated democracy at the other.'⁷⁵ These authors thus conceptualise hybridity as the mid-point between democracy and authoritarianism, where the latter is defined as an absence of the institutions of the former. Hybrid regimes on this view have the potential to either slip 'up' the scale towards democracy, or 'down' towards authoritarianism at any given moment. The concept of hybridity thereby functions as a sort of 'holding category', that is, another stage through which regimes must pass on their way towards the democratic 'end point' on the classificatory scale. The most obvious operationalization of this scale is employed by the US NGO Freedom

⁷³ L. Shevtsova, 'Russia's Hybrid Regime', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 12, No. 4, (October 2001); Brown, 'From Democratization to "Guided Democracy"'; L. Diamond, 'Thinking About Hybrid Regimes', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (April 2002); K. McMann, *Economic Autonomy and Democracy: Hybrid Regimes in Russia and Kyrgyzstan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); see also Brooker, *Non-Democratic Regimes*, pp. 17.

⁷⁴ T. Carothers, 'The End of the Transition Paradigm', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (January 2002).

⁷⁵ M. Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003), pp. 6.

House, which grades regimes out of seven according to their commitment to the protection of political and civil rights. In the main, Western countries and their allies score highest and non-Western countries score lowest and, between the 'free' countries of the democratic West and the 'not free' countries of the authoritarian East, lies the nebulous category of 'partly free', synonymous, of course, with hybridity.⁷⁶ (This was the spot occupied by Russia until it was controversially downgraded to 'not free' in 2004.) Underlying the Freedom House system is the assumption of a continuum, based on the presence, partial presence or absence of liberal democratic institutions. At the root of the continuum is a commitment the Western trajectory of socio-political development, the values on which it is based and its concomitant normative status as a universalisable ideal.⁷⁷

While this approach provides a useful way in which to classify regimes according to their take-up of Western democratic praxes, there are three reasons why I find it unsuitable for the Russian case. . First, it has clear normative and teleological implications: liberal democracy is posited as the ideal end-point to be arrived at sooner or later. Therefore, despite claims to have abandoned the transitology paradigm, the core implication is that Russia and others have stalled in their transitions, and now lie at some uncomfortable place between failed democracy and former authoritarianism.⁷⁸ Thus, the teleology and historicist determinism that scholars scorned in the transitology literature remains, albeit in slightly more subtle form.⁷⁹ Second, such studies tend to leave the concept of authoritarianism undefined, assuming that the reader understands it in residual terms as either a corruption or an absence of democratic institutions, rather than as an ensemble of innovative governing mechanisms that support and sustain non-democratic rule. This restricts the analysis to the (mal)functioning of the institutions of democracy, rather than to an exploration of what other mechanisms of power

⁷⁶ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2012: The Arab Uprisings and their Global Repercussions*, http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/inline_images/FIW%202012%20Booklet--Final.pdf (accessed 15 March 2012).

⁷⁷ H. Wiarda, 'The Ethnocentrism of the Social Science: Implications for Research and Policy' *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (July 1981); D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁷⁸ Carothers, 'End of the Transition Paradigm'; S. Levitsky L. and Way, 'The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2002).

⁷⁹ See, for example, M. Burawoy and K. Verdery, *Uncertain Transition: Ethnographies of Change in the Post-Soviet World* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), pp. 15; T. Carothers, 'The End of the Transition Paradigm'; H. Wiarda, 'Southern Europe, Eastern Europe and Comparative Politics: Transitology and the Need for New Theory', *Eastern European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Fall, 2001).

management might be operating. Third, the tendency to use the classificatory system on emergent regimes represents, to borrow a phrase from Giovanni Sartori, the trend to move away from questions of 'what is' towards questions of 'how much'.⁸⁰ However, it is impossible to answer questions of 'how much' before we understand 'what is'. In short, while works in this category represent a useful means to gauge how far a regime may be considered democratic, but they tell us little about the substantive content of authoritarian or hybrid rule, the focus of the present thesis.

The second category constitutes a mid-way point between the first and third categories: while it focusses on the institutional mechanisms of representative democracy, it nonetheless seeks to delineate authoritarian strategies of control and manipulation of those mechanisms. The key site for these analyses is elections; numerous subcategories have been posited that aim to capture the way in which democratic and authoritarian tendencies vie for influence over this process.⁸¹ For instance, Stephen Levitsky and Lucan Way have delineated the concept of 'competitive authoritarianism', as a particular type of hybrid regime where, rather than openly violating democratic rules (for example, by banning or repressing the opposition and the media), incumbents are more likely to use bribery, co-optation, and more subtle forms of persecution, such as the use of tax authorities, compliant judiciaries, and other state agencies to "legally" harass, persecute, or extort cooperative behaviour from critics.⁸² In the context of the Middle East, Stephen Heydemann writes of 'upgrading' authoritarianism, that is, a 'hybrid form of authoritarianism' which

Combines tried-and-true strategies of the past—coercion, surveillance, patronage, corruption, and personalism—with innovations that reflect the determination of authoritarian elites to

⁸⁰ G. Sartori, 'Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (1970).

⁸¹ Levitsky, and Way, 'The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism'; A. Schedler, *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006); S. Heydemann, 'Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World', The Saban Center for Middle East Policy and the Brookings Institution, Analysis Paper No. 13, October 2007; T. Colton and H. Hale, 'The Putin Vote: Presidential Electorates in a Hybrid Regime', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 68, No. 3, (Fall 2009); L. March, 'Managing Opposition in a Hybrid Regime: Just Russia and Parastatal Opposition', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 68, No. 3, (Fall 2009); S. Levitsky and L. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁸² Levitsky and Way, 'The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism'.

respond aggressively to the triple threat of globalization, markets, and democratization.⁸³

These works give valuable insights into the ways in which regimes employ authoritarian strategies to co-opt representative democratic processes, and are certainly of much relevance to the analysis of the Russian electoral system. However, their application the case of PCBs is less useful, since, as discussed above, PCBs fall outside of the framework of institutional democracy. Chapter Three of the present thesis also shows that in the case of Russia, the discourse of globalization and markets has been enthusiastically embraced by Putin as a means for Russia to rise in the international system and, importantly, as a legitimating narrative for PCBs.

Works in the third category are the most interesting for an understanding how non-democratic regimes operate because they attempt to take them on their own terms and explore the institutional complexes through which power is maintained. In order to do this, they tend to conceive of democracy and authoritarianism as two discrete concepts that have their own internal coherence, with the interaction between them producing hybridity. For instance, Richard Sakwa has defined Russia's hybrid regime as a 'dual system', that is 'characterised by two system logics... combining democratic and authoritarian features.'⁸⁴ For him, the Russian political system should be seen as comprising two subsystems, a legitimate 'constitutional state' and a patronal, arbitrary 'administrative regime', both of which 'are in a constant interaction, the essence of its hybridity.'⁸⁵ The 'administrative regime' is the embodiment of authoritarian tendencies and is defined as a 'network of social relations, in which political and economic power are entwined in a shifting landscape of factional politics, and also an actor in the political process.'⁸⁶ He writes, 'the tragedy of Russian post-communism is that these two blocs have become locked into stalemate, preventing a radical move towards a more genuinely open and competitive political system and a de-bureaucratized economy.'⁸⁷ Moving

⁸³ S. Heydemann, 'Uprading Authoritarianism in the Arab World', The Saban Center for Middle East Policy and the Brookings Institution, Analysis Paper No. 13, October 2007, pp. 3.

⁸⁴ R. Sakwa, *The Crisis of Russian Democracy: The Dual State, Factionalism and the Medvedev Succession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 37.

⁸⁵ Sakwa, *The Crisis of Russian Democracy*, pp. 41.

⁸⁶ Sakwa, *The Crisis of Russian Democracy*, pp. 42.

⁸⁷ Sakwa, *The Crisis of Russian Democracy*, pp. 44.

further away from the framework of democracy, Jayasuriya and Rodan's 2007 study of Southeast Asian political regimes focuses not on the institutional requisites of liberal democracy, but rather on varying 'modes of participation', defined as 'the institutional structures and ideologies that shape the inclusion and exclusion of individuals and groups in the political process' that a particular regime enables.⁸⁸ Arguing that 'hybrid regimes... should not be seen only as evidence of institutional dysfunction,'⁸⁹ they uncover a variety of such *fora* that would not be picked up by analyses that begin with democratic institutions. They state, 'rather than dismissing some modes of participation as mere artefacts of dysfunctional democratic institutions, we seek instead to explain the underlying political dynamics behind such participation.'⁹⁰ Thus, their work constitutes an important contribution to an understanding of the ways that enable hybrid regimes to contain conflict and gather feedback that do not exist in democracies. Taken together, these two works demonstrate that hybrid regimes do not merely consist of an absence or a corruption of democratic institutions, but also of innovative governing mechanisms that depart from the democratic model. Such an approach to hybridity aims to deepen understandings of such mechanisms.

This thesis aims to contribute to the third body of research. While not disputing that there are certain features of Russia's political system that fall into the classificatory category of democracy, I focus on aspects of what Sakwa has termed its authoritarian 'administrative regime.' In other words, I do not seek to classify the Russian political system *tout court*; rather, I attempt to elaborate some of the structures that enable Russia's authoritarian subsystem to sustain itself as the neoliberalisation of the public sector undermines the state's monopoly on information. Like Jayasuriya and Rodan, I attempt to create a framework that takes these structures on their own terms, rather than perceiving authoritarianism simply as a lack or a corruption of democratic institutions. In order to do this, I follow Juan Linz's conception of authoritarianism as 'limited pluralism', which refers to the mechanisms through which authoritarian regimes simultaneously allow certain groups to participate in public politics and constrain their participation. In this light, PCBs represent a means for the authorities to retain high levels of information in

⁸⁸ K. Jayasuriya and G. Rodan, 'Beyond Hybrid Regimes: More Participation, Less Contestation in South-East Asia', *Democratization*, Vol. 14, No. 5, (November 2007).

⁸⁹ Jayasuriya and Rodan, 'Beyond Hybrid Regimes'.

⁹⁰ Jayasuriya and Rodan, 'Beyond Hybrid Regimes'.

light of the privatization of the public sector while allowing controlled and restricted participation by the public. I now elaborate his conception in detail.

Juan Linz is perhaps the most important scholar of authoritarianism, whose pioneering work on Franco's Spain brought the concept into mainstream political science usage. In this study, he defined authoritarian regimes as possessing four main qualities. These regimes are:

Political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits, but actually quite predictable ones.⁹¹

The first three categories were elaborated further in a later work in which he contrasted authoritarian with totalitarian systems, the boundary between which he claims is much more fluid than between democracies and non-democracies.⁹² For Linz, a political system is totalitarian when the following three factors are present: first, there is political monism, that is, a harmonistic, totalising design for state-society relations that can be imposed from above; second, there is an exclusive and elaborated ideology that guides development; third, there are significant levels of citizen participation and mobilisation for social goals as defined by a single party.⁹³ Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany are considered the two main examples of such a regime. Authoritarian regimes, by contrast, are not monistic but possess a form of limited pluralism, that is, there are certain non-state groups which are able to influence politics within the regime; they are not guided by ideologies, but instead display evidence of what Linz calls mentalities, that is, 'ways of thinking and feeling, more emotional than rational, that provide non-codified ways of reacting to different situations'⁹⁴; and instead of the high levels of mobilisation among the citizenry under totalitarianism, the public are disengaged from the political process since 'effective

⁹¹ J. Linz and A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 38.

⁹² J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder, CA: Lynne Rienner Publishers Ltd., 2000), pp. 60.

⁹³ Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, pp. 70.

⁹⁴ Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, pp. 163.

mobilisation, particularly through a single party and its mass organisations, would be perceived as a threat by the other components of the limited pluralism, particularly the army, the bureaucracy, the churches or interest groups.⁹⁵

For Linz, the most important of these factors in understanding the various types of authoritarian regime is that of limited pluralism: different regimes possess different institutional mechanisms for managing this pluralism and co-ordinating civic participation. The category of limited pluralism allows the scholar to take into account 'which institutions and groups are allowed to participate and in what way and which ones are excluded.'⁹⁶ He has delineated five subtypes of authoritarian regime 'based fundamentally on the type of participants in the limited pluralism and on the way in which they are organised, as well as the level and type of participation.'⁹⁷ These subtypes are: bureaucratic-military authoritarian regimes; forms of institutionalisation of certain groups that Linz calls 'organic statist' (which is synonymous with a corporatist understanding of state-society relations); mobilisational-authoritarian regimes in post-democratic states; post-independence mobilisational authoritarian regimes; and post-totalitarian authoritarian regimes.⁹⁸

The most important category for my purposes here is the corporatist 'organic statist' regime. In such a regime, Linz writes,

We find that a variety of social groups and institutions defined by the state are created and allowed to participate to one or another degree under the forms we shall call "organic statism" which is often ideologically defined as corporatism.⁹⁹

Organic statist or corporatist regimes thus aim to institutionalise existing social pluralism in a controlled format, thereby allowing citizens access to certain mechanisms of participation but excluding them from others (which are typically reserved for the elite). Reasons that rulers may choose to implement this mode of political organisation consist, Linz claims, of a simultaneous rejection of both the typical liberal democratic and the class-based institutional ensembles, while at the

⁹⁵ Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, pp. 166.

⁹⁶ Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, pp. 175.

⁹⁷ Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, pp. 54.

⁹⁸ Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, pp. 54.

⁹⁹ Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, pp. 176.

same time needing to provide institutional channels for interest representation.¹⁰⁰ It thus constitutes a third way of sorts between Western and state socialist modes of domestic political organisation¹⁰¹; this dual rejection of both ideologies has, according to Linz, led to a myriad of diverse ideological justifications for corporatist structures.¹⁰² However, the inevitable result of the use of such structures is that they become just one element of the domestic organisation of political power as elites themselves are rarely accountable to them. Despite this, they nonetheless represent a limit to the 'monistic ambitions' of the political elite who may otherwise attempt to move towards a more totalitarian system.¹⁰³

Overall, Linz's insightful exposition of limited pluralism channelled through corporatist structures in authoritarian regimes evokes precisely the kind of civic participation that the expanding network of PCBs enables. This network represents the creation of participatory institutions that run parallel to electoral modes of political representation, which themselves are often manipulated to serve the interests of elites. PCBs are a means through which a plurality of voices may contribute to processes of policy-formation and delivery but this plurality is ultimately managed by the state through a tightly controlled selection process and by legal subordination of these bodies to state agencies. It also recalls Sakwa's conception of Russia's administrative regime, in which the Federal Public Chamber is posited as a central feature, which 'indicated once again Putin's penchant for para-constitutional solutions to problems of public administration.'¹⁰⁴

Why, then, do I not use Linz's theory of authoritarianism alone? Why the need for added considerations of neoliberal governance? The question I want to answer concerns *why* PCBs are emerging and proliferating, since their intended function shapes (but not determines) the kind of participation they engender, as I show in Chapters Five and Six. Linz has provided an excellent typology of *what* PCBs are (i.e. a means for an authoritarian government to allow limited interest representation in the absence of other mechanisms). However, in order to explain their conditions of emergence and their role in the broader architecture of the contemporary Russian state, I have chosen instead to begin with the concept of governance, which places

¹⁰⁰ Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, pp. 208.

¹⁰¹ However, Linz also recognises the body of literature that demonstrates the corporatist tendencies in liberal democratic states: see Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, pp. 211.

¹⁰² Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, pp. 209.

¹⁰³ Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, pp. 213.

¹⁰⁴ Sakwa, *The Crisis of Russian Democracy*, pp. 164.

the proliferation of participatory mechanisms within an on-going process of market reform of the state bureaucracy (indeed, I have shown in the previous chapter that this was precisely the context in which PCBs emerged). In this chapter, I have argued in the first section that the mechanisms created through the neoliberal restructuring of the public sector in specific locales are the products of interaction between global norms and domestic political cultures and reform agendas. In the second section, I have argued that the shift from government to governance wrought by processes of neoliberalisation has necessitated an increase in levels of public participation in policy formation and delivery. The present section has claimed that public participation in authoritarian regimes has the central feature of limited pluralism, which I suggest highlights the ways in which this new participation in policy-making is co-ordinated by the regime in order to retain a high level of state control. This, I argue, is 'authoritarian neoliberal governance.'

The concept of authoritarian neoliberal governance situates the development of citizen participation in governance networks within the context of the marketization of the non-democratic state. Recall Rhodes' conception of governance networks above as possessing a high level of autonomy from the state; in Russia's authoritarian regime, these networks possess a very limited level of autonomy, as participation is strongly limited and regulated by the authorities (but, as I demonstrate in Chapters Five and Six, they do manage modestly to influence state policy). Although generalisations at this stage are indicative only, I suggest that governance in non-democracies is thus qualitatively different to governance in democracies, although both are responses to the neoliberal roll back of the state bureaucracy. Authoritarian neoliberal governance captures this difference: it highlights the institutional mechanisms through which the requirement for increased civic participation is rendered compatible with high levels of state control.

The concept allows a consideration of PCBs (or other governance mechanisms) from three perspectives. First, it enables a deeper understanding of the new modes of authoritarian governing that are emerging in the neoliberal era as a result of public sector reform. It thus adds to the body of work that explores the substantive institutions of authoritarian rule. Second, it enables an appreciation of the flexibility and pervasiveness of global neoliberal governing practices by showing how they mutate and survive in diverse contexts. It thus adds to those works discussed in the first section that explore the variations in neoliberal practices

around the world and the factors that shape them. Third, it provides insights into the ways in which authoritarian states are managing the new relationship between the state and citizens brought about by neoliberal public sector reform and, concomitantly, it allows for an examination into the extent to which citizens may advance their interests through these mechanisms. The concept of authoritarian neoliberal governance throws up such questions as

- Which institutional mechanisms are being developed by authoritarian states in order to respond to the loss of monopoly over the information necessary to make public policy?
- How far do domestic authoritarian productions of global governance norms differ from those promoted at the international level?
- Where are the limits to the pluralism enabled by these governance mechanisms? or How far can citizens influence the policy-making process through these institutions?

I have already answered the first question in the previous chapter: PCBs are the main public participatory mechanisms through which Russia is seeking to harness information and expertise now located outside of the state as a result of administrative reforms. The second question is answered in the following chapter, in which I compare the international discourse of civic participation in governance with Putin's articulations thereof, and show that the latter remains deeply influenced by Soviet-era conceptions of civic participation. I answer the third question in Chapters Five and Six, by showing that PCBs enable citizens to exert a modest influence over the policy-making process.

Finally, the concept also enables the possibility for future comparative research since it starts with the assumption that authoritarian states are adopting, to various extents and in various guises, the new governing techniques that accompany processes of neoliberalization. (Indeed, several other post-Soviet countries are also developing their own PCB networks.¹⁰⁵) Authoritarian neoliberal governance presents the possibility of comparisons in terms of the institutional

¹⁰⁵ See, for instance, 'Obshchestvennyye Palaty Kazakhstana i Rossii podpisali memorandum o vzaimoponimani', *Fergana News*, 27 May 2008, <http://www.fergananews.com/news.php?id=9267> (accessed 8 August 2014); 'Kambin postanovil sozdat' obshchestvennyye sovety', *RBK Ukraina*, 4 November 2010, <http://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/politics/kabmin-postanovil-sozdat-obshchestvennyye-sovety-04112010145900> (accessed 8 August 2014); 'Obshchestvennyi sovet pri MVD Belarus', <http://mvd.gov.by/ru/main.aspx?guid=15761> (accessed 8 August 2014); 'V Azerbaidjane uchrezhdeno dvizheniye "Obshchestvennaya Palata"', *Kavkazskii Uzel*, 28 December 2010, <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/178994/> (accessed 8 August 2014).

compositions of participatory mechanisms in authoritarian contexts, how much pluralism they allow and how their legitimating discourses differ both from international norms and from those of other authoritarian states. I do not pretend to answer these questions in this thesis; it is something I wish to explore in further research.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have constructed the concept of ‘authoritarian neoliberal governance’, which I argue captures the process of the emergence and proliferation of PCBs. I have argued that it refers to state-driven practices by which non-democratic regimes co-ordinate multiple non-state stakeholders in the public policy-making process. The first section argued that there has been a global trend towards the marketization of public sectors around the world, with governments introducing policies of privatisation, decentralisation, outsourcing and public-private partnerships into areas that were formerly the preserve of the state. I employed the term ‘neoliberalisation’ to capture the process of ‘roll back’ of the state function. However, I also argued that this takes place to different extents and for slightly different reasons in different social and political contexts and that in order to understand the reasons, one must look to the state’s legitimating narrative. The second section argued that, in order cope with the loss of information and expertise that this ‘roll back’ has wrought, authorities have ‘rolled out’ governance networks that include citizens and other non-state actors in policy-related decision-making processes. The third section introduced the concept ‘authoritarian’, in order to highlight the partial and limited independence of governance networks from the state in non-democratic regimes and reinforce that the government is the ultimate arbiter of decision-making processes in such states.

The previous chapter showed that PCBs emerged as state-dependent public participatory bodies in the context of the market reform of Russia’s public sector. This chapter has sought to conceptualise their emergence as part of the Russian state’s ‘roll out’ mechanisms with which to cope with effects of the ‘roll back’ of Soviet-era bureaucracy. The following chapter explores the Putin government’s legitimating narrative through an analysis of the discourse of civic participation in governance in Russia. It shows how the Kremlin’s contemporary discourse combines elements drawn from the Soviet era, which sees citizens as willing

assistants to state projects with elements advanced by international norm-promoting organisations, which promote civic engagement in governance as a means for economic development: it is thus a discourse of authoritarian neoliberal governance.

Chapter Three: Emergence

In Chapter One, I argued that the PCB network, although bearing some of the hallmarks of Soviet-era monitory bodies, is a qualitatively new innovation in governance arising from the marketization of the Soviet-era public sector and charted its development over the last ten years I demonstrated that increasing the levels of civic engagement in governance has been a key project for the Putin government and that the concept of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* in particular has been used to legitimate and promote the expansion of the PCB network. In Chapter Two, I argued that the proliferation of institutions that aim to foster civic engagement must be seen as part of a trend towards 'authoritarian neoliberal governance', which captures the processes by which states limit and control civic participation in policy-making and delivery. The rest of this thesis considers the emergence of the PCB network from a Critical Discourse Analytical perspective in order to distinguish the roles assigned to PCBs in state discourse from the social practices they actually perform.

The present chapter begins this process with a consideration of the emergence and constitution of Putin's discourse on civic engagement in governance. Critical Discourse Analysis states that new discourses are created by combining existing discourses together.¹ As discussed in the introduction, a discourse is understood as a particular stable linguistic representation or 'vision' of a set of social practices articulated by a specific social group.² In this context, Norman Fairclough has shown how the construction of the 'Third Way' in New Labour discourse was a conscious project by the Blair government, which combined discourses of social democracy and economic dynamism in an attempt to steer the course of social change and thereby inculcate new social practices in British citizens. He shows that this new discourse was constantly made and re-made in government speeches and documents through the on-going drawing of links between the two composite, anterior discourses.³ Applying this approach to the case of Russia, I argue that the Kremlin's discourse of civic engagement is made up of a

¹ Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, pp. 127.

² Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language*, pp. 21.

³ Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language*, pp. 4.

blend of elements drawn from Soviet-era and international discourses (that is, the publications of norm-promoting transnational organisations) on civic engagement. I thus sketch the visions of civic engagement in government in these two prior discourses before showing how they have combined in Putin's discourse.⁴

The folding of these two discourses into contemporary articulations has been surprisingly easy to achieve, as there is a significant level of overlap in the Soviet and international representations of the role of the citizen in governance. In the case of the Soviet conceptualisation, active citizens must effectively 'become' the state as they monitor its activities; in the case of international conceptualisations, citizens must act on behalf of the state, performing the tasks it perceives that it either can no longer afford or is no longer best suited to do. Thus, both conceive of a consensual relationship between society and the state, viewing the citizen as helping the authorities perform socially important tasks. In both cases, the state makes the decisions and the citizens implement them. This correlation makes it easy for the Kremlin to blend elements of both without appearing illogical or inconsistent.

The significant difference between Soviet and contemporary Russian discourses is, of course, that the former were justified by references to Marxist-Leninist theory, while the latter uses elements of neoliberal economics. This transition has been easy to make, given the delegitimisation of Marxist-Leninist theory embodied in the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of Russia as a capitalist economy. Putin's discourse of civic engagement in governance appeared about 14 years after the collapse, at a time when living standards were improving and memories of the tumultuous 1990s had begun to fade. It was felt that it was time for citizens to shake off their Soviet era passivity and the initial post-Soviet introversion and begin to engage in public activities.⁵ Citizens could now continue to enrich themselves and benefit the country by assisting the local authorities in matters of governance.

This chapter is split into three sections. In the first section, I deal with Soviet conceptions of *kontrol'*, discussing first *rabochyi* (workers') then *narodnyi* (people's) *kontrol'*, concepts I argue were central to the Soviet state's conception of civic

⁴ A discourse of civic participation in governance that linked active citizenry to democratisation and reform was prevalent during *perestroika*, and is discussed briefly in Chapter Five. However, it is wholly absent from the contemporary discursive terrain due to its associations with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ensuing decade of instability.

⁵ See also E. Chebankova, *Civil Society in Putin's Russia* (Oxford, Routledge, 2013), pp. 31.

engagement in governance. I show that in both instances, citizens were presented as assistants to the authorities, a view legitimated by various aspects of Marxist-Leninist theory. In the second section, I examine international discourses of governance, draw out three distinct but related discourses promulgated by three different types of institution, namely the United Nations, international financial institutions and European intergovernmental bodies, and show that Russia has engaged with each, in terms of signing collective agreements, receiving assistance (financial and otherwise) and conducting joint projects. These discourses present civic engagement in governance as an essential part of the marketization of the public sector and a means to increase a nation's economic competitiveness. In the final section, I examine the Kremlin's own discourse on civic engagement in governance through a study of two collections of texts: Putin's seven pre-election articles of 2012 and six Presidential speeches to the Federation Council between 2008 and 2013. These are paradigmatic exegeses of the Kremlin's contemporary worldview: the pre-election articles articulate Putin's strategy for national development over the coming years to the electorate and the Federation Council speeches are annual reflections on the state of the nation given by the incumbent President and broadcast on national television. I show that the Kremlin exhorts the citizen to become involved in governance, conceived of as assisting the state, in order that Russia gains international competitive advantage in the global economy. It thus recalls the relationship between citizens and the state advanced in the Soviet era, both nominally, through the use of the concept *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, and substantively, since citizens are presented as handmaidens to state-designed projects, but is legitimated by a logic of neoliberal public sector reform reminiscent of the international discourse. In showing the roots of Russia's contemporary discourse, the chapter demonstrates that PCBs are presented as a tool for harnessing citizens' expertise and activeness in order to increase economic competitiveness, rather than a means to enhance democratic participation. It also confirms the salience of Soviet legacies in contemporary Russian political discourse and practices. Finally, recalling the stipulation of scholars of neoliberalisation discussed in the previous chapter, who state that in order to understand how and why global neoliberal norms are reproduced at the domestic level, it is necessary to examine the narrative promoted by the state to legitimate them, the chapter provides

insight into how neoliberal practices of governance are appropriated, rearticulated and, moreover, justified by the political establishment in post-Soviet Russia.

From *Rabochyi Kontrol'* to *Narodnyi Kontrol'*

The concept of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* has had a long evolution and can be traced back to the socialist concept of *rabochyi kontrol'* (workers' control), advocated (and later dismissed) by the Bolsheviks in the early days of the revolution, and *narodnyi kontrol'* (people's control), devised by Khrushchev in the post-Stalin era and developed by Brezhnev into extensive practices of surveillance by volunteer inspectors. It would be very interesting to conduct an in-depth analysis of how practices diverged from rhetoric in both instances; however, my purpose here is to give a briefer sketch of what both concepts meant in relation to the evolution of representations of civic engagement in governance during the Soviet Union. In this section, I examine both concepts, showing how they were legitimated by different aspects of Marxist-Leninist theory and how they were articulated in practice through the creation of monitory institutions. I show that, in both cases, what initially seemed like a democratic and participatory measure was reduced to the mobilisation of citizens in ensuring state policy was properly executed.

Rabochyi kontrol'

The idea of *rabochyi kontrol'* (workers' control/oversight) dates back to the early days of revolutionary Russia. It was one of the three central demands of the Bolshevik Revolution alongside 'peace' and 'land to the peasants'⁶ and was initially understood to be one of the 'conditions of emancipation'⁷ of workers from the capitalist classes. According to Marxist theory, it was only by altering the relations of production, that is, the social relationships that make production possible (in this case, the subordinate relationship of workers to managers), that the bourgeois capitalist state could be truly overthrown. *Rabochyi kontrol'* suggested to factory workers that they could also become the factory managers (a position occupied by the bourgeoisie under capitalism), that they would be the ones to make the decisions that affected their working lives, and thereby create a classless society.

⁶ J. Reed, 'The Origins of Workers' Control of Industry in Russia', 23 November 1918, *Marxists.org*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/reed/1918/origins.htm> (accessed 15 April 2014).

⁷ V.I. Lenin, 'Draft Declaration of the Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People', *Lenin: Selected Works: Vol. 6* (London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd., 1936), pp. 453.

As such, its meaning was initially tied to the economic aspects of the socialist agenda, with workers' political participation to be channelled through the soviets.

From March 1917, the institutions that emerged to operationalize the concept of *rabochyi kontrol'* were autonomous factory committees that fulfilled basic bargaining functions within a particular factory in relation to questions of hours, wages and manufacturing procedures, (and thus were similar to trade unions, which had been forbidden under the Tsarist regime and were consequently still nascent).⁸ The soviets, by contrast, were intended as sites for the discussion of political issues such as the continuation of the war, the direction of the revolution, and so on. However, what the two institutions had in common was that both were quickly subordinated to the organs of the Party and the state. Thus *rabochyi kontrol'* was reduced to the task of monitoring the implementation of decisions made by the elite.

The concept of *rabochyi kontrol'* was something of a slogan in early to mid-1917,⁹ becoming, in Lenin's texts of this period, virtually synonymous with the successful construction of socialism.¹⁰ The idea appeared briefly in his April Theses, and was continually referred to and elaborated on in the months between the two revolutions. The three stated aims of this measure were, first, to curb the power of factory and business-owners and start the transition towards a socialist economy,¹¹ second, to educate workers in the management of industry¹² and, third, to prevent the sabotage of industry by anti-revolutionaries.¹³ Thus, aside from its historicist deterministic implications, typical of Marxist-Leninist theorising at the time, it was considered as a practical tool, both as a school in participatory governance and as a means for combatting corruption.

However, Lenin saw *rabochyi kontrol'* only as a temporary measure. In his view, after the workers had seized control of industry, the next step towards the construction of socialism could be accomplished: the creation of a 'workers' administration of industry'.¹⁴ In a key text published shortly before the October Revolution, he stated,

⁸ M. Perrins, 'Rabkrin and Workers' Control in Russia 1917-34', *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 2, (1980).

⁹ Lenin, 'The Anniversary of the Revolution', *Lenin: Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 488.

¹⁰ See Lenin, 'An Alliance Between the Workers and the Toiling Peasants', *Lenin: Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 426, 427.

¹¹ See Lenin, 'Draft Declaration of the Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People', *Lenin: Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 452.

¹² Lenin, 'The Anniversary of the Revolution', *Lenin: Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 488.

¹³ Lenin, 'To the Population', *Lenin: Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 285.

¹⁴ Lenin, 'The Anniversary of the Revolution', *Lenin: Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 487.

When we say workers' control, always associating that slogan with the dictatorship of the proletariat, and always putting it *after* the latter, we thereby make plain what state we have in mind... If it is a proletarian state we are referring to, i.e. the dictatorship of the proletariat, then workers' control *can* become a national, all-embracing, omnipresent, extremely precise and extremely scrupulous *accounting* of the production and distribution of goods.¹⁵ [Emphasis in original].

This indicates that workers' control should not extend to workers' decision-making in the production and distribution processes, only to the accounting or monitoring of them. While it is not specified whose work should be monitored, it is clear that it is the work of the Bolshevik Party. Defined in this way, the near equating of *rabochyi kontrol'* with the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' suggests a clear separation between the state and party officials, who manage industry, and the workers and masses, who monitor their management. The former make the decisions; the latter ensure that they are properly implemented.

This conceptualisation of *rabochyi kontrol'* was articulated in full the following month in the Draft Statutes on Workers' Control, November 1917, which formed the basis of the Decree on Workers' Control passed several weeks later.¹⁶ The Statutes were intended to introduce *rabochyi kontrol'* of 'the production, warehousing, purchase and sale of all products and raw materials', either directly, if the enterprise was small enough, or via elected delegates in the case of larger institutions.¹⁷ In order to accomplish this task, workers were to be given 'access to all books and documents and to all warehouses and stocks of materials, instruments and products, without exception.'¹⁸ However, they were not given control of decision-making. The sixth Statute on Workers' Control stated that,

In enterprises of state importance all the owners and all the delegates of the workers and employees elected for the purpose

¹⁵ Lenin, 'Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?', *Lenin: Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 265.

¹⁶ A. Fineberg, (ed.) in Lenin, *Lenin: Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 623.

¹⁷ Lenin, 'Draft Statutes on Workers' Control', *Lenin: Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 410.

¹⁸ Lenin, 'Draft Statutes on Workers' Control', *Lenin: Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 410.

of exercising workers' control are answerable to the state for the maintenance of the strictest order and discipline and for the protection of property.¹⁹

The seventh Statute outlines virtually all industries as being of state importance:

Enterprises of state importance shall be understood to comprise all enterprises working for defence purposes, or in any way connected with the production of articles necessary for the existence of the masses of the population.²⁰

In other words, the factory committees, some of which were developing as independent, popularly controlled mechanisms for managing the workplace, were to be brought under the supervision of the centralising state, which would be the principal decision-maker in questions relating to industry. 'Control' by the workers extended only to ensuring that the books were in order and that stock was accounted for.

The ratified version of this text added a further six points, which stipulated the establishment of an All-Russian Council of Workers' Control, whose membership was decided by the Party, and which would oversee the activities of regional branches, themselves responsible for *rabochyi kontrol'* in their territory.²¹ This structure did not automatically overturn the factory committees, which for several months continued to exist alongside these councils. However, in December 1917, the All-Russian Council of Workers' Control was absorbed into the newly-founded and centralised Supreme Soviet of the National Economy (Vesenkha), created to oversee the management of the economy. With the creation of this institution, Lenin perceived the transitional phase of *rabochyi kontrol'* to be over.²² After several attempts by the factory committees to assert alternative representations of *rabochyi kontrol'* (notably in their self-published Practical Manual for the Implementation of Workers' Control of Industry), at the First All-Russian

¹⁹ Lenin, 'Draft Statutes on Workers' Control', *Lenin: Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 410.

²⁰ Lenin, 'Draft Statutes on Workers' Control', *Lenin: Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 411.

²¹ M. Brinton, *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control: The State and Counter-Revolution*, (London: Solidarity, 1970), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/brinton/1970/workers-control/> (accessed 16 April 2014).

²² Brinton, *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control*.

Congress of Trade Unions in January 1918, members voted to absorb the factory committees into the trade unions.²³

The substitution of the idea of *rabochyi kontrol'* for the task of accounting gained pace as 1918 approached. As the revolutionary state consolidated itself, Lenin declared the most 'decisive' task to be the 'organisation of the strictest and nation-wide accounting and control of production and of the distribution of goods.'²⁴ Accounting should no longer be applied solely to the economic questions of production; it should be extended to the social and political questions of distribution as well. Maurice Brinton has pointed out that in *The State and Revolution*, Lenin's famous text on the role of the revolutionary state in society published at the end of 1917, there is little mention of *rabochyi kontrol'*. Instead, Lenin expands on his conception of *kontrol'* as 'immediate change such that all fulfil the functions of control and supervision, that all become "bureaucrats" for a time, and that no one therefore can become a "bureaucrat".'²⁵ On this view, then, the worker is the very embodiment of the will of the state: there is no need for a distinction between state and non-state workers since everyone works together for the advancement of centrally determined goals.

By the end of 1918, helped along by a sharp drop in industrial productivity, the concept of *rabochyi kontrol'* was thoroughly delegitimised in Bolshevik discourse. Most of the major industries had been nationalised. In the words of one government spokesman in August of that year, '*rabochyi kontrol'* of industry carried out by the Factory and Plant Committees has shown what can be expected if the plans of the anarchists are realised.'²⁶ Instead, the idea of *gosudarstvennyi kontrol'* (state control) was advocated, with a People's Commissariat of State Control (Goskon) performing the functions of monitoring the implementation of state policy and weeding out corruption and saboteurs, that had initially been assigned to the instruments of workers' control.²⁷ In 1920, this organ was transformed into the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate (Rabkrin) with Joseph Stalin at its head, only to merge with the Party Central Control Commission (which monitored Party discipline) three years later to become the Central Control Commission-Workers'

²³ Perrins, 'Rabkrin and Workers' Control in Russia 1917-34'.

²⁴ V.I. Lenin, 'The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government', *Lenin: Selected Works, Vol. 7*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1937), pp. 319.

²⁵ Brinton, *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control*.

²⁶ Brinton, *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control*.

²⁷ Perrins, 'Rabkrin and Workers' Control in Russia 1917-34'.

and Peasants' Inspectorate (TsKK-RKI). According to Isaac Deutscher, 'The Rabkrin... was set up to control every branch of the administration, from top to bottom, with a view to eliminating the two major faults, inefficiency and corruption.'²⁸ However, its recommendations in the spheres of both agriculture and industry were rarely taken on board either by the state bodies that it monitored or the Party officials to whom it reported.²⁹ This was the first manifestation of a problem that has continued to plague the instruments of *kontrol'* throughout the hundred-year history of their evolution.

The monitoring activities of the TsKK-RKI continued into the early Stalin years and provided the blue-print for the later development of *narodnyi kontrol'* discussed below. Of the important role of the TsKK-RKI in establishing norms of surveillance, Jan Adams states,

By creating a number of well-defined participatory mechanisms within the authoritarian framework of the Soviet compliance establishment, the TsKK-RKI provided a later generation of reformers with a valuable legacy of techniques and precedents.³⁰

However, the institution quickly became irrelevant to Stalin's centrally organised administrative system and it was dissolved in 1934. Until his death, mechanisms of control were based on the enactment of the dictator's will, through institutions such as the secret police (NKVD) and the Party Control Commission.³¹

In sum, the Leninist conception of *rabochyi kontrol'* saw the role of the worker not as an independent decision-maker, but someone who should monitor the implementation of Party policy. According to the Bolsheviks, it did not signify the means by which workers could determine their conditions of labour, but a system of monitoring, auditing and accounting of decisions made by the elite. Although at first it seemed a genuine participatory-democratic mechanism and despite initial protests by the Factory Commissions and the anarchists who clung to this view, the Bolshevik conception became hegemonic in a matter of months, and was constituted in practice in the form of Rabkrin, the Central Control Commission and

²⁸ I. Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), pp. 230.

²⁹ Perrins, 'Rabkrin and Workers' Control in Russia 1917-34'.

³⁰ J. Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977), pp. 36.

³¹ Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 38-9.

their successor organisations. The relationship between citizens and the state advanced through this discourse and enacted through these institutions was that all citizens should be working towards the goals of the state, exposing corruption and inefficiency in the process. *Rabochyi kontrol'* was thus replaced by *gosudarstvennyi kontrol'* in both discourse and practice until destalinization began more than twenty years later.

Narodnyi Kontrol'

From the post-Stalin era to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the discourse of *narodnyi kontrol'* was a popular state-promoted representation of civic participation in governance that encouraged citizens to monitor the implementation of state policy by the state bureaucracy at union, republic, regional and municipal levels. Like *rabochyi kontrol'*, it was legitimized with reference to Marxist-Leninist theory. It was first articulated by Nikita Khrushchev in the early 1960s alongside the devolution of state responsibilities to 'public organisations', as a means to achieve the 'withering away of the state', perceived to be the next stage of communist development.³² In *The State and Revolution*, Lenin had set out a clear chronology for this process:

Society thus far, operating amid class antagonisms, needed the state, that is, an organisation of the particular exploiting class... When at last it becomes the real representative of the whole of society, it renders itself unnecessary... State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies down of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things... The state is not 'abolished'. It *withers away*.³³ [Emphasis in original.]

At the end of the 1950s, post-Stalinist ideologues considered the first stage of this process to be complete: the 1961 Party Congress affirmed that 'the state has become the state of the entire people, an organ expressing the interests and the

³² A. Evans, *Soviet Marxism-Leninism: The Decline of an Ideology* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993), pp. 95.

³³ V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1984), pp. 19.

will of the people as a whole.’³⁴ Now it was time to deal with the second stage. According to Khrushchev,

Every worker, every peasant, every member of the intelligentsia can say, “we are the state, its policy is our policy, and the task of developing it and strengthening it against any and all encroachment is our common task.”³⁵

In other words, the withering away of the state meant that the distinction between state and society would collapse. The concept of *narodnyi kontrol’* thus served both ideological and practical purposes: on the one hand, it was intended to help inaugurate the withering away of the state, by enlisting citizens in administrative affairs. On the other hand, it was a response to increasing dissatisfaction with existing methods of state inspection.³⁶ The institutions that were created were thus intended simultaneously to increase civic participation and reduce corruption. However, like the institutions which practiced the Leninist conception of *rabochyi kontrol’*, People’s Control Committees failed to become the critical watchdogs hoped for by their initial creators, instead becoming another bureaucratic arm of the state.

There was much public discussion throughout the mid to late 1950s of the appropriate form of monitoring organisations should take after destalinization and how to overcome the atrophied relationship between society and the state.³⁷ The deliberative aspect of civic engagement was considered an important part of this process; for instance, the Party programme adopted at the 22nd Party Congress in 1961 declared that, ‘Discussion by the people of draft laws and other decisions of both national and local significance must become the rule.’³⁸ The idea of *kontrol’* was discussed in this context the following year at the Communist Party Central Committee plenum in November 1962. In his opening speech, Nikita Khrushchev

³⁴ M. Sandle, ‘Soviet and Eastern Bloc Marxism’ in D. Glaser and D. Walker, (eds.), *Twentieth Century Marxism: A Global Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 68.

³⁵ Evans, *Soviet Marxism-Leninism*, pp. 93-94.

³⁶ H. Swearer, ‘Who Controls Whom?’ *Problems of Communism*, July 1963, <http://www.unz.org/Pub/ProblemsCommunism-1963jul-00046?View=PDF> (accessed 18 April 2014).

³⁷ See Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 51-56.

³⁸ T. Friedgut, *Political Participation in the USSR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 147.

stated, 'At this time of large-scale development of communist society, it is necessary to give special attention to improving party, state and public control [*obshchestvennogo kontrolya*].'³⁹ (The use of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* here shows that the post-Stalinist discourse of civic participation in governance had not yet been consolidated; hereafter, such practices are referred to as *narodnyi kontrol'*.) Not only was *kontrol'* intended to reduce corruption, Khrushchev also believed that 'participation in control activities should inculcate civic values and create a responsible citizenry.'⁴⁰ Citing Lenin's exhortation constantly to develop new forms of social organisation, he called for the introduction of new surveillance institutions based in society that would improve the ailing economy by reducing corruption and ensure that party and state policies were adequately fulfilled. However, Jan Adams also states that an underlying reason for Khrushchev's preoccupation with compliance institutions was a perceived need to fill the void left by the abandonment of Stalin's disciplinary techniques of fear and repression.⁴¹

Created one month later in December 1962, the Party-State Control Committee (KPGK) was given a broad mandate. Not only should it expose 'bureaucrats, parasites, bribe-takers, thieves, speculators and confidence men', it should also prevent such crimes from occurring in the first place by aiming to 'indoctrinate cadres, to guard against failures and short-comings in work.'⁴² Its extensive powers included the right to access state documents and reports and the responsibility to

Stop illegal orders and acts... which damage the interests of the state; establish periods for the correction of persons who are guilty of unsatisfactory fulfilment of party and government decisions; ...impose cash fines on officials who materially damage state, co-operative and public organisations; bring culprits to account and impose disciplinary penalties; demote culprits and remove them from posts; and send material on abuses and other criminal acts

³⁹ N. Khrushchev, 'O pazvitii ekonomiki SSSR i perestroike partiinogo rukovodstvo narodnym khozyaistvom', *Magnitogorskii Metall*, 28 November 1962, http://magmetall.ru/pdf/1962-11-28_02.pdf (accessed 18 April 2014).

⁴⁰ Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 61.

⁴¹ Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 59.

⁴² *Sovetskaya Rossiya* in Swearer, 'Who Controls Whom?'

to organs of the prosecutors office to bring wrong-doers to criminal responsibility.⁴³

In other words, inspectors were tasked with ensuring complicity among state workers in the economic sphere of production, the bureaucratic sphere of administration and the ideological sphere of adhering to party line via means of spot-checks, verifying documentation and liaising with law enforcement bodies.

The organisation was split into two divisions: salaried staff and part-time volunteers, with the former responsible for achieving state objectives in the field of 'control' and for expanding the volunteer base, and the latter for carrying out the spot-checks. Thus, although not reflected in the new institution's name, the bulk of the actual 'control' work was to be performed by the volunteers. By September of the following year, committees had been set up in all Soviet republics, territories and regions, as well as in over a thousand cities and districts, 348 industrial zones and over 1500 collective farms.⁴⁴

The use of volunteers in the state governance programme expanded under Leonid Brezhnev, with the number of citizen inspectors growing by 40% by 1968.⁴⁵ In 1965, the Party-State Control Committee was re-named People's Control Committee (*Komitet Narodnogo Kontrolya*), indicating a recognition on the part of the next Soviet leader that *narodnyi kontrol'* was a 'more accurate description' of the institution's activities.⁴⁶ At this time, then, the concept referred to the practices of monitoring and assisting the government that the Committee fostered in its members. However, the 1968 statute also stipulated an important new function of the KNK by elaborating a new role for the citizen inspectors: they were to gather details of the public mood and pass them on to relevant state agencies. For instance, regional committees were required to set up and operate complaint bureaux, which, aside from receiving and processing local grievances, should also gather citizens' suggestions for improvements in state policy and relay them to officials higher up the state bureaucracy. Committees were required to 'bring more important questions to the consideration of corresponding party, soviet and economic agencies and in necessary instances to the consideration of the central

⁴³ Sovetskaya Rossiya in Swearer, 'Who Controls Whom?'.
⁴⁴ Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 79-80.
⁴⁵ Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 107.

⁴⁶ L. Brezhnev in J. Adams, 'People's Control in the Soviet Union', *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 4, (December 1967).

institutions and organisations.⁴⁷ This information was then to be analysed by the Union-level KNK and presented to the Communist Party Central Committee and the USSR Council of Ministers. Thus, by 1968, *narodnyi kontrol'* no longer solely referred to the monitoring of the implementation of state policy, but also to the gathering of feedback from society regarding these policies, in the absence of any other channels for assessing popular mood.

The organisation existed in this form, with a few minor changes, for the next twenty-five years, with the number of volunteers growing year on year until *perestroika*. According to a 1975 article by Communist Party paper, *Partiinaya Zhizn*, the main task of people's controllers was to 'check the factual fulfilment of the directives of party and government in the areas of the economy, of economic and cultural construction.'⁴⁸ The anti-corruption aspect thus remained the KNK's central focus. The Communist Party became an increasingly important influence over KNK activities as the number of party-affiliated committee members and volunteers soured throughout the seventies, numbering over 50% in 1977.⁴⁹ In 1990, it was replaced by the Control Chamber of the USSR, a short-lived body that existed for exactly one year to the USSR's collapse.

Overall, the concept of *narodnyi kontrol'* referred to the practices of on-going monitoring by citizens of government activities in all spheres of public life in order to ensure complicity with state directives, as well as sustaining a feedback loop between citizens and the authorities. It thus built on and extended the Leninist concept of *rabochyi kontrol'* in three ways. First, the distinction between an administrator and a decision-maker that had been implied by Lenin was made explicit. The citizen inspector's main tasks were clearly defined and delimited as monitoring the implementation of state policy, a role that, unlike the Factory Commissions' view of *rabochyi kontrol'*, remained unchallenged by social groups. Second, the concept was used to indicate the advent of a higher stage of communist development. Whereas *rabochyi kontrol'* highlighted the need for a shift away from the capitalist relations of productions, *narodnyi kontrol'* indicated the increasingly blurred line between society and the state, indicative of the 'withering away of the state'. Third, beyond the checking and auditing function instituted by Rabkrin, the post-Stalinist authorities recognised that inspectors' proximity to social life made it

⁴⁷ Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 108.

⁴⁸ Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 108.

⁴⁹ Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 150.

logical to institute the second function of providing feedback on poorly received or implemented policies in order that decision-makers could amend their approach where necessary. Furthermore, although *narodnyi kontrol'* seemed to have been promoted by Khrushchev as an antidote to Stalinist repressions and a means for devolving power to citizens, it quickly became a compliance mechanism not only for those being monitored, but also for the inspectors themselves since it served to socialise citizens into the goals of the party and the state. This indicates that there was a high level of disconnect between the rhetoric and the social practices of *narodnyi kontrol'*.

Conclusion

This section has explored the evolution of the concepts of *rabochyi* and *narodnyi kontrol'* in the context of civic participation in governance during the Soviet Union. It has shown that both were central concepts in the authorities' vision of state-society relations under Communism. Although there were other opportunities to engage in governance (as discussed in Chapter One), it was the bodies founded by the state to enact *rabochyi* and *narodnyi kontrol'* that were considered to inculcate the ideal relationship between citizens and the authorities. In both conceptions, this relationship consisted of citizens freely giving their time to assist the state in the execution of its goals and suggested that the state-society distinction was somewhat redundant as everyone, regardless of whether or not they were formally employed as state officials, worked towards the same ends. The task of determining these ends was, crucially, excluded from both practices of *kontrol'*. As I will show in the final section of this chapter, this understanding of the relationship between citizens and the authorities remains central to the contemporary state discourse of civic participation in governance, captured in the concept *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*. However, the contemporary discourse legitimates itself not according to Marxist-Leninist theory, but to norms of international competitiveness. I now turn to a discussion of these norms as advanced by international organisations with which Russia has co-operated.

International Discourse of 'Good Governance'

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has become increasingly integrated into the global society of states, evidenced by its engagement with

numerous intergovernmental bodies.⁵⁰ This engagement occurs through a shared dialogue relating to the advancement of common goals and interests. Indeed, there is a central linguistic element to the promotion of governance in the international system: an ensemble of ‘best practices’ has been promoted by intergovernmental institutions through a variety of genres including reports, guides, seminars, forums, conventions and other semiotic events. Russia has been included in many of them, as a participant, signatory, member or recipient, and has thus been encouraged and, in some cases, required to reflect on and implement recommendations for improving governance structures. In other words, it has been encouraged to turn the discourse into action. Norman Fairclough has observed that ‘a new language of governance appears to be emerging on an international basis and transcending boundaries between governmental and other types of organisation.’⁵¹ My analysis here confirms his assertion; however, there are subtle differences in the discourses of governance articulated by different types of intergovernmental institution. In this section, I examine three complementary discourses of governance promoted by institutions with which Russia frequently engages: the citizen-oriented ‘good governance’ agenda of the United Nations, the linking of ‘good governance’ to economic development by international financial institutions, and the representation of governance through the prism of democracy by European intergovernmental institutions. In what follows below, I briefly discuss each of these, highlighting points of divergence, illuminating Russia’s engagement with them and tracing an overarching neoliberal logic to their recommendations.

United Nations

The concept of governance, specifically ‘good governance’ is central to the UN’s vision of creating a better world. It was a key theme of the United Nations’ Millennium Declaration (of which Russia was also a signatory). This Declaration stipulated that success in meeting the development objectives outlined in the rest of the resolution, such as poverty reduction, environmental protection and the promotion of human rights ‘depends, *inter alia*, on good governance within each country’. Furthermore, it resolved ‘to work collectively for more inclusive political

⁵⁰ Russia’s engagement with the international community is beginning to change in light of the 2014 Ukraine crisis. However, Russia has already adopted a market-oriented domestic governing logic, and the reduced levels of international co-operation are unlikely to change this.

⁵¹ Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language?*, pp. 79.

processes, allowing genuine participation by all citizens in all our countries.’⁵² Since then, the UN has promoted a discourse that links ‘good governance’ to neoliberal practices such as decentralisation, marketization of public services and more civic participation, which it claims produce a more just and prosperous world society. Here I briefly consider one central means of disseminating this discourse with which Russia has engaged: The Global Forums on Reinventing Government.

The Global Forums were annual gatherings of ministers, NGO leaders, business executives, academics and other stakeholders that aimed to promote a set of best practices regarding public sector reform, broadly termed ‘good governance’. The first Forum was held in Brasilia in 2000 and was inspired by the initial Reinventing Government forum held the previous year in the US, in which ‘creating a government that works better and costs less’ was the primary goal.⁵³ Until 2007, a biennial Global Forum took place on various aspects of what the UN perceived to be key areas of governance, from e-government⁵⁴ and innovation and quality⁵⁵ to the role of partnerships in government⁵⁶ and increasing citizen participation.⁵⁷

At the Sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government held in Seoul in 2005, 148 states, including Russia, signed the Seoul Declaration on Participatory and Transparent Governance. This statement linked good governance directly to neoliberal public sector reform and encouraged signatories to adapt domestic bureaucracy to facilitate market conditions. For instance, the Declaration’s preamble stated that ‘profound changes are underway in the public and private sectors of many countries’ and that governments must respond to these changes by ‘transform[ing] the scope and conduct of their activities to meet these national,

⁵² Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly 55/2: United Nations Millennium Declaration, 18 September 2000, <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm> (accessed 8 April 2014).

⁵³ ‘Vision, Mission, Goals, 1998’, National Partnership for Reinventing Government, <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/vision.html>, (accessed 10 April 2014).

⁵⁴ Third Global Forum on Reinventing Government, 2001, Naples, Italy. See <http://www.unpan.org/DPADM/GlobalForum/3rdGlobalForum/tabid/607/Default.aspx> (accessed 10 April 2014).

⁵⁵ Fifth Global Forum on Reinventing Government, 2003, Mexico City, Mexico, <http://www.unpan.org/DPADM/GlobalForum/5thGlobalForum/tabid/603/Default.aspx> (accessed 10 April 2014).

⁵⁶ Fourth Global Forum on Reinventing Government, 2002, Marrakech, Morocco, <http://www.unpan.org/DPADM/GlobalForum/4thGlobalForum/tabid/604/Default.aspx> (accessed 10 April 2014).

⁵⁷ Sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government, 2005, Seoul, Republic of Korea, <http://www.unpan.org/DPADM/GlobalForum/6thGlobalForum/tabid/602/Default.aspx> (accessed 10 April 2014).

regional and global challenges'. In other words, it presented the shift from government to governance as a vague, agent-less, global process of change that is somehow occurring of its own accord, rather than the set of state-driven policies discussed in the previous chapter. It advanced the assumption that, because this change cannot be controlled or stopped, domestic governments must adapt to it by adopting a programme neoliberal public sector reform.

The reforms listed in the main body of the Declaration were legitimated by the assertion that 'a framework of good governance is necessary for socio-economic development'. This framework consisted of various neoliberal policies, including 'performance-based management', 'results-based budgeting', the development of 'performance indicators', easing 'regulations that restrict competition', and 'administrative and financial decentralisation.'⁵⁸ In other words, it stated that states could become more prosperous by adopting a neoliberal governance agenda.

One section of the Declaration was devoted to the role of civil society in governance. Civil society should be engaged 'as a partner' in decision-making processes and at the implementation stage of public policy because signatories 'agree that building constructive partnerships between states, businesses and civil society is essential for achieving sustainable economic development.' However, the text did not state how such partnerships improve economic performance; the assumption is that multi-stakeholder governance networks are inherently good for business and do not need legitimation. Further, in presenting the task of government reform as one of adaptation to pre-existing conditions, the neoliberal agenda appears as the only possible course of action and discussions of why the reforms are necessary and of alternative directions are stifled. In this way, it advanced a programme that in fact drives the processes of change outlined in the preamble, rather than responds to or mitigates them, although it presented them as a response. As such, in signing the declaration, states endorsed some of the key components of neoliberal reform of the public sector.

The Forums grew to be very popular, with most countries of the world represented and thousands of delegates in attendance. The underlying assumption behind the programme, of course, was that governments around the world needed

⁵⁸ 'The Seoul Declaration on Participatory and Transparent Governance', 27 May 2005, available at: http://www.i-p-o.org/GF6-Seoul_Declaration-27May05.htm (accessed 10 April 2014).

to be reinvented. The narrative, though never explicitly laid out, was that a 'smaller' state, in partnership with businesses, NGOs and active citizens, could deliver public services more efficiently than the cumbersome welfare states of the mid-twentieth century. In short, it was thus based on the neoliberal belief in the supremacy of the free market and sought to universalise the programme of New Public Management that had been occurring in the Anglophone world since the 1980s. However, the Global Forum on Reinventing Government has convened only once since the establishment of the UN Project Office on Governance, thus suggesting that the UN considered the reinvention of government as governance to have been achieved.

In sum, the discourse of governance advanced in the UN's Global Forum has sought to universalize a core set of 'best practices' relating to public sector reform by presenting it as the only response to unstoppable global trends. These practices are termed 'good governance' and closely correspond to a neoliberal restructuring of the welfare state along the lines of New Public Management. They have been legitimated by the assumption that such reforms – which include decentralisation, increasing private-public partnerships, instituting performance-based management tools, improving democratic processes such as elections and creating innovative channels through which citizens can get involved in governance – will increase economic prosperity for all. Civic participation in governance is thus a central component of the UN's 'good governance' paradigm.

World Bank and International Monetary Fund

The World Bank and the IMF have focussed more explicitly on the economic aspects of 'good governance' as a normative programme for economic development.⁵⁹ The World Bank has advanced a conception that facilitates cross-country analysis and allows for a differentiation of 'good governance' against poor governance. Here, governance is defined as 'the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised', which includes

The process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of governments to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state

⁵⁹ D. Kaufmann and A. Kraay, 'Growth without Governance', World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, No. 2928, (November 2002); 'The IMF and Good Governance', International Monetary Fund, <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/gov.htm> (accessed 11 April 2014).

for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them.⁶⁰

In the mid-1990s, World Bank researchers developed a set of six quantitative indicators against which they claim it is possible to ‘measure governance’ throughout the world. These are: voice and accountability, political stability and lack of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption.⁶¹ The Bank’s researchers claim that the higher the scores on these criteria, the more likely a country will be to demonstrate stable economic growth.⁶² Representing ‘good governance’ in this way links ideal institutional development to a neoliberal, pro-business Anglo-Saxon model and, indeed, the countries that perform best on these indicators are precisely these countries.⁶³ Thus, while these indicators initially seem less normatively charged than similar indicators measuring ‘freedom’ or ‘democracy’ (such as those of Freedom House discussed in the previous chapter), the results are virtually identical as the same countries tend to score highest.

Like the World Bank, the IMF is active in promoting ‘good governance’, as ‘key to economic success’.⁶⁴ Although not explicitly defined, the concept is linked to trade liberalisation, accountable policy-making institutions and transparency in financial transactions.⁶⁵ Thus, neoliberal reforms are also central to the achievement of the IMF’s vision of ‘good governance’. In 1997, it adopted a more pro-active policy on promoting governance that comprised four points: to engage more thoroughly in issues of governance during the so-called ‘Article IV Consultations’ (that is, the IMF’s annual review of a country’s economic policies); to advocate anti-corruption policies more vigorously; to consider issues of governance in all countries, not just ‘developing’ ones; and to engage with other intergovernmental institutions promoting an agenda of governance (such as the

⁶⁰ D. Kaufmann, A. Kraay and M. Mastruzzi, ‘Governance Matters VIII: Aggregate and Individual Governance Indicators 1996-2008’, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, No. 4978, (June 2009), pp. 5.

⁶¹ Russia’s performance in the Worldwide Governance Indicators between 1996 and 2012 can be found here: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/pdf/c187.pdf> (accessed 11 April 2014).

⁶² Kaufmann and Kraay, ‘Growth without Governance’.

⁶³ See ‘Worldwide Governance Indicators’, <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#home> (accessed 11 April 2014).

⁶⁴ ‘The IMF and Good Governance’, International Monetary Fund, <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/gov.htm> (accessed 11 April 2014).

⁶⁵ ‘Good Governance: The IMF’s Role’, The International Monetary Fund, Washington DC, 1997, pp. 1-2.

World Bank) in order to share expertise.⁶⁶ In other words, this policy sought to universalise discourses of governance, both in terms of what was being articulated by intergovernmental institutions and to which countries it was being promoted. The document also links a neoliberal discourse to a discourse of governance, for instance by stating that the development of governing institutions should be conducive to 'efficient private sector activities.'⁶⁷

One important way in which the creation of a hegemonic international discourse was achieved was to link it to 'best practices'. For instance, World Bank's measurements are used by international donors and financial institutions for 'actionable' purposes: to uncover areas that require reform and assess the results of reforms already enacted; to encourage developing countries to put questions of governance on their domestic agendas; and as bases on which to distribute grants.⁶⁸ Indeed, some international donors want to 'reward' developing countries with loans or grants who are shown to be 'improving' their governance structures according to these indicators.⁶⁹ Thus, important incentives for countries to alter practices of governance are tied into the discourse. Similarly, the IMF also encourages the adoption of 'good governance' by countries in need of loans. Prior to receiving a loan, country authorities must describe their current governance practices in a 'letter of intent'. If these practices are considered by the IMF to be substandard, measures to improve governance will be included in loan conditionality.

It is, of course, well known that Russia had significant dealings with both institutions after the fall of the USSR and it is not my purpose to give a detailed account of their engagement here. In short, the two bodies implemented a coordinated strategy during the 1990s to transform Russia's centrally planned economy into a market economy, with the World Bank negotiating the details of the reforms, and the IMF co-ordinating the loan conditionality.⁷⁰ By the end of the 1990s, the IMF had loaned Russia over £20 billion, making the country its largest

⁶⁶ 'Good Governance: The IMF's Role', pp. 2.

⁶⁷ 'Good Governance: The IMF's Role', pp. 3.

⁶⁸ See 'A Decade of Measuring the Quality of Governance: Governance Matters 2007: Worldwide Governance Indicators 1996-2006', The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, Washington DC, 2007, pp. 2; Arndt, C., 'The Politics of Governance Ratings', *International Public Management Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 3, (2008).

⁶⁹ Arndt, 'The Politics of Governance Ratings'.

⁷⁰ J. Odling-Smee, 'The IMF and Russia in the 1990s', IMF Working Paper, August 2004, pp. 9, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2004/wp04155.pdf> (accessed 12 April 2014).

borrower,⁷¹ while the World Bank has financed 70 projects in Russia since 1992, distributing over \$10.5 billion, with public sector reform a central focus.⁷² Thus, Russia was required to engage with discourses of economic governance and develop practices that operationalized the discourse advanced by these global financial bodies. In sum, civic engagement in governance is a less explicit component in the discourse advanced by the IMF and World Bank; instead, their conception of 'good governance' presents it as a conducive domestic environment for business.

The Council of Europe and the Organisation for Co-operation and Security in Europe

In contrast to the two discourses of good governance discussed, the Council of Europe and the OSCE are more explicit in linking governance to democracy. The former institution is more value-oriented, providing fora in which member states can engage in discussions of best practices and develops recommendations for improving levels of civic participation, while the latter is primarily concerned with security aspects of governance, such as arms control, corruption and conflict resolution. Therefore, while both refer to good governance as a central basis for co-operation among states, the Council of Europe has developed a more extensive discourse in this regard than the OSCE.

One of the Council of Europe's stated aims is to establish a common 'democratic' space across the continent of Europe, and considers the promotion of a discourse of good governance one of the main means by which to achieve it.⁷³ Its Good Governance Division comprises four sectors and discourse is a central aspect of each. The first one is an intergovernmental European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG), intended as a forum in which governments can exchange ideas relating to 'issues concerning citizens' democratic participation, democratic governance and the modernisation of public administration, in particular at local and

⁷¹ 'Business: The Economy: Russia: The IMF's Biggest Failure', *BBC News*, 23 September 1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/455673.stm> (accessed 12 April 2014).

⁷² 'Russia Overview', The World Bank, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/russia/overview> (accessed 11 April 2014).

⁷³ 'The Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance: A Short Presentation with Related Implementing Documents', <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=2048945&Site=&BackColorInternet=B9BDEE&BackColorIntranet=FFCD4F&BackColorLogged=FFC679> (accessed 11 April 2014).

regional level.⁷⁴ The aim is to produce a set of best practices and guidelines for member states concerning governance practices as well as to conduct 'peer reviews' of member states' public sector institutions at their request; however, its first plenary sessions was in January 2014 so it is too early to assess the precise kinds of practices this institution will promote.⁷⁵

The second is the Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at the Local Level, a twelve-point guide adopted in Valencia in 2007 by member states' ministers responsible for local government (including Russia). The twelve points are: fair conduct of elections, representation and participation; responsiveness (in terms of how quickly services are provided to citizens); efficiency and effectiveness; openness and transparency; rule of law; ethical conduct; competence and capacity (of public servants to perform their work); innovation and openness to change; sustainability and long-term orientation; sound financial management; human rights, cultural diversity and social cohesion; and accountability.⁷⁶ In contrast to the UN's Project Office on Governance, which mentions 'electoral and participatory democracy' as fourth on a list of ten points, here 'fair conduct of elections' is first on the list and is considered separate from 'participation and representation', the second point. The emphasis on democratic norms, although the concept itself is not stated, is the greatest of all the institutional types discussed here. Member states are encouraged to adopt these principles and measure their progress against a 'European benchmark.' So far several states including Bulgaria and Ukraine (though not yet Russia) have used the strategy as a tool to aid the transformation of local governance structures.⁷⁷

The third sector is the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform, the Council of Europe's 'operational arm' in the field of improving governance structures among its member states. It has helped decentralise all Central and East European countries, including Russia, as part of their post-communist transformations and is the most explicitly 'neoliberal' in its articulation of its governance agenda, claiming

⁷⁴ Democracy, Institution-Building and Governance Department, The CDDG Secretariat, http://www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/Directorate_DI/default_en.asp (accessed 11 April 2014).

⁷⁵ Terms of Reference, European Committee on Democracy and Governance, <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CDDG-ToF&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=&BackColorInternet=B9BDEE&BackColorIntranet=FFCD4F&BackColorLogged=FFC679> (accessed 11 April 2014).

⁷⁶ See 'The Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance', pp. 13-38.

⁷⁷ About Us: General Information, Democracy, Institution-Building and Governance Department, Good Governance Division, http://www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/Directorate_DI/default_en.asp (accessed 11 April 2014).

to 'pioneer an innovative business model' for improving the capacity of local authorities.⁷⁸ Finally, the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning (CEMAT) brings together representatives of the 47 member states to discuss the promotion of the territorial dimension of human rights and democracy.⁷⁹ Overall, it is clear that a shared discourse based on values such as a commitment to democracy, human rights and the free market is a fundamental part of Council of Europe's strategy of promoting governance: it has created many fora in which member states can come together and articulate their experiences, understandings and visions in these fields.

The groundwork for the creation of the OSCE was laid in the 1975 Helsinki Accords, which aimed to improve relations between the Communist Bloc and the West and in which the Soviet Union had a founding role. Like the Council of Europe, the OSCE has a special division that focusses on questions of governance. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) was created on the behest of the Paris Charter in November 1990, of which the USSR was also a signatory. The Charter is a highly normative document, which sought to draw eastern European countries emerging from the USSR into the ideological sphere of the West. For instance, it states that 'the free will of the individual, exercised in democracy and protected by the rule of law forms the necessary basis for successful economic and social development.'⁸⁰

Initially called the Office for Free Elections, the ODIHR is structurally analogous to the Council of Europe's Good Governance Division in that it is the department responsible for promoting democratic norms. While its mandate was initially confined to elections, it was expanded two years later to include all aspects of the 'human dimension' of security. However, it is more 'action-orientated' than the Council of Europe in that it conducts specific programmes 'on the ground' to increase citizen participation in political decision-making, rather than organise discussion forums and conventions or draw up strategies and declarations. Thus, discourse plays a somewhat less central role in the promotion of its values. As such,

⁷⁸ Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform, Council of Europe, http://www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/Centre_Expertise/default_en.asp (accessed 11 April 2014).

⁷⁹ Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Spatial and Regional Planning (CEMAT), Council of Europe, http://www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/cemat/default_en.asp (accessed 11 April 2014).

⁸⁰ 'Charter of Paris for a New Europe', OSCE, Paris, 19-21 November 1990, pp. 4, <http://www.osce.org/mc/39516?download=true> (accessed 13 April 2014).

the OSCE has not formally adopted a definition of 'good governance'; however, according to its former deputy head, Peter Eicher, 'human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance are concepts so intertwined they cannot really be separated'.⁸¹ Its engagement with Russia has generally been confined to sending election observers, something that Russia has never been particularly happy with.⁸² Overall, the fact that the OSCE is rooted in an attempt to bring together Eastern and Western Europe is likely to play a part in the fact that this organisation less fiercely promotes a discourse of good governance and democracy. Nonetheless, its election monitoring programme attempts to operationalise norms of representative democracy.

Conclusion

In this section, I have shown that three distinct but related discourses of 'good governance' are discernible across three types of intergovernmental institution. First, the UN understands good governance to include business and NGO groups in public sector work as a way of making the economy fairer. Second, the IMF and World Bank present good governance as a means to ensure economic growth (and a condition for receiving financial assistance). Third, the Council of Europe and (to a lesser extent) the OSCE portray good governance as equivalent to the formal institutions of democracy. Clearly, these differences stem from the different aims and goals of the institutions, with the UN acting as a platform for co-operation between an enormous diversity of political regimes, the IMF and World Bank regulating the global economy and the Council of Europe and the OSCE promoting democracy and stability in Europe. Thus, governance is portrayed as relatively apolitical by the UN, IMF and World Bank, while in the regional European institutions it is made explicitly political: the Council of Europe and the OSCE are much more open about the normative agenda embodied in their recommendations.⁸³ The two financial institutions, by contrast, refrain from using an explicit discourse of democracy, with the IMF admitting that, 'although it is difficult to separate economic aspects of governance from political aspects,' their work should be confined to the

⁸¹ P. Eicher, 'Good Governance: Some Thoughts on the OSCE Role', Statement to the 9th Meeting of the OSCE Economic Forum, 15 May 2001, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/18832?download=true> (accessed 11 April 2014).

⁸² Russia, OSCE, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/russia> (accessed 11 April 2014).

⁸³ See 'The Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance', pp. 5.

former.⁸⁴ The UN mentions democracy as one of many factors in creating good governance but, unlike the European institutions, it does not feature centrally in its articulations. The subtle differences between the representations of governance demonstrate the slippery nature of the concept itself and the possibilities that exist for transforming its meaning.

Despite these differences, the discourses discussed here have a central aspect in common. 'Good governance' is not represented as an end in itself; rather as a means to greater economic prosperity (and, particularly in the case of the European institutions, to enhanced democratic development). The policies of 'good governance' in all cases include increasing levels of private-public partnerships, reducing trade barriers, tackling corruption, decentralising government services and increasing civic participation. They thus comprise the core neoliberal public sector reform agenda discussed in the previous chapter. This suggests that civic engagement in governance is primarily considered a means for making the state more economically successful. The construction of the neoliberal state is thus presented as an end in itself, the good life.

To conclude this section, the dominant international discourse of good governance sees civic engagement in governance as a core component and legitimates it according to an assertion that it will increase financial prosperity. Russia has been drawn into the discourses advanced by these bodies, as a signatory to conventions, a recipient of loans and a member of institutions and, as I show below, has also adopted this narrative in order to legitimate the proliferation of public consultative bodies. I now discuss the Kremlin's contemporary discourse of civic engagement in governance, and show that in many ways, Russia is doing precisely what the intergovernmental institutions have stipulated.

[The Kremlin's Discourse of Civic Engagement in Governance](#)

In this section, through an exposition of the discourse of civic engagement in Putin's seven pre-election articles and six annual Presidential Addresses to the Federal Assembly between 2008 and 2013, I present a general picture of the Kremlin's distinctive worldview and the role of civic engagement in governance within it. I show that contemporary Russia's discourse on civic engagement

⁸⁴ 'Good Governance: The IMF's Role', pp. 4.

governance is rooted in elements of the two discourses discussed above. The Kremlin advances the same subordinate relationship of citizens to the authorities as that advanced during the Soviet era, but expands it by calling for citizens not merely to monitor state activities, but also to perform socially oriented tasks on its behalf and legitimates it according to a discourse of economic competitiveness similar to that promoted by the international organisations. This contemporary formulation combines the neoliberal idea of an active citizen performing the functions that the state no longer does with the Soviet idea of a united citizenry in the service of the (Communist) state. Furthermore, the contemporary use of the concept *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* to describe activities similar to those designated by the concepts *rabochyi* and *narodnyi kontrol'* makes an explicit and intentional link to the past.

Putin's Pre-Election Articles

These are seven detailed essays published weekly in leading newspapers prior to the May 2012 presidential election, which set out Putin's vision for the development of the country over the next several years, should he become President. Following an initial overview article, the remaining six provide an exposition of Putin's position in the following policy areas: migration and the ethnic make-up of Russia; the economy; democracy and other forms of political participation; welfare policy; defence; and foreign policy. A clear argument is distinguishable across the seven essays. It is based on the idea promoted by the international organisations discussed above, that the changes taking place globally require domestic policy change. Like the changes mentioned by the international organisations, many of the changes advanced in the articles relate to the neoliberal restructuring of the public sector. However, Putin adapts the international discourse so that it coincides with his leadership style. He portrays himself as the strong, capable leader of a historic nation by emphasising that winning the 'global race' will not be easy, will require a lot of work and a number of reforms, but will be facilitated by the country's great history, superior culture and unique geopolitical position. Importantly, all Russians must work together to achieve this vision: citizens need to assist the state in becoming more economically competitive. To do this, they must shake off their Soviet-era passivity and involve themselves in local governance. In what follows here, I detail his portrayal of the strategy to succeed in what he terms

the 'struggle for leadership in the global competition'⁸⁵ and show that civic participation in governance is a central part of it.

Putin's legitimating narrative starts from the assumption that the unstoppable forces of globalisation require new policies at home. This recalls the preamble of the Seoul Declaration discussed above, which implied that the shifting boundary between the state and business is inevitable and that the only option is to make policy that facilitates it. However, in his version, Putin extends the description of this change by emphasising its dangerous aspects (and thereby implicitly positions himself as the most qualified person to navigate it):

By and large, what the world faces today is a serious systemic crisis, a tectonic process of global transformation. It is a visible manifestation of the transition to a new cultural, economic, technological, geopolitical era. The world is entering a zone of turbulence. And, naturally, this period will be long and painful.⁸⁶

The classification of the current era as a unique, pivotal moment in global history serves two important rhetorical purposes: first, it authorises the use of drastic measures to deal with it and second, it provides a unifying myth for a national consensus. For instance, although he does not specify any details of the new era, why this period will be long and painful, or what the 'visible' evidence of this transformation is, the designation of it as 'natural' implies that it is also inevitable and that Russians will have to pull together and bear policies of austerity for the sake of the country. Indeed, this particular extract was used to legitimate a key neoliberal public sector reform: cuts to the welfare budget. In extending the narrative advanced in the Seoul Declaration, Putin has not only legitimated the need for reform (because of the unstoppable forces of change) but has positioned himself as the obvious choice to lead the country through these tough times (since he presents himself as understanding the nature of these dangers).

Economic competitiveness is a core aspect of the international governance agenda and has also been embraced in Putin's discourse. The idea that there is a

⁸⁵ V. Putin, 'Nam Nuzhna Novaya Ekonomika', *Vedomosti*, 30 January 2012, http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/news/1488145/o_nashih_ekonomicheskikh_zadachah (accessed 25 April 2014).

⁸⁶ V. Putin, 'Rossiya Sosredotachivayetsya: Vyzovy, Na Kotoryye My Dolzhny Otvetit', *Izvestiya*, 16 January 2012, <http://izvestia.ru/news/511884> (accessed 25 April 2014).

global economic competition between countries is central to his legitimating narrative for new governance mechanisms and is elaborated in his article on economics, in which he also gives more information on what he understands the 'new era' to consist of. It is useful to quote his introduction to this article in full:

We are living in times of radical economic change across the globe. Never before have there been such rapid technological advances. Much of what we are used to seeing around us today seemed like science fiction 15 to 20 years ago. Never before has the struggle for leadership in the global competition been so acute, and we are now seeing countries which seemed only yesterday to hold unshakable positions starting to give way to those who until recently were regarded with condescension and disdain. Never before have people faced such a great risk of technological disaster and never before have environmental hazards been so severe. But neither has human capability been so vast. Those who apply new capabilities to the greatest extent are the ones who come out on top.⁸⁷

Although he is unclear on the specifics of the changes he mentions, his argument is a clear capitalist one: economic growth is linked to technological innovation, but growth is a zero-sum game and is therefore only meaningful when relative to other countries, which is why Russia must compete for ideas and people. Economic policy should aim to increase competition both internationally and domestically through technological innovation. The uniqueness of the present age is underlined by the repetition 'never before': a total of four times. Instability and risk are key themes but, having delineated the precariousness of the situation, he presents his solution: to win the global competition by maximising the nation's skills and capabilities. The assumption is that the integrated nature of the global economy requires the Russia economy to be competitive internationally, which provides the backdrop for his project of national renewal that requires a united citizenry working together to achieve it. This theme runs across all his texts and is his core legitimating narrative.

⁸⁷ Putin, 'Nam Nyzhna Novaya Ekonomika'.

The central position of global competition to Putin's worldview necessitates a focus on Russia as a unified entity, a single team with Putin as its captain. This position is reinforced by repeated slippages between the use of a 'we' that refers to Putin and his government and a 'we' that refers to Russia as a whole. For instance, he states, 'We are the only ones responsible for the way we respond to today's challenges and how we apply our opportunity to strengthen ourselves and our position in the rapidly-changing world.'⁸⁸ As Fairclough has pointed out, this is advantageous for a leader who wants to represent itself as speaking for the entire nation.⁸⁹ Elsewhere, he writes, 'External challenges and the changing world around us affect our economic, cultural, fiscal and investment policies.'⁹⁰ It is clear that 'us' refers to everyone, as the 'changing world' is inhabited by the entire Russian population. The 'our', by contrast, seems to refer to the policies of the Putin government, but its position next to the all-inclusive 'us' indicate that these policies belong to everyone as well. This serves to create the impression that Russian citizens are united behind Putin's policies. The same slippage is displayed here too: 'This enabled us all to pull our country out of the mire... I would like to stress that we achieved all this through democratic, constitutional means.'⁹¹ In other words, while all citizens helped to restabilise Russia, it was the government, acting according to the constitution, which directed them. Again, this presents government and citizens as a united force, working together. This particular citation also demonstrates another important and frequently employed device in Putin's texts, a juxtaposition of the first person singular and the first person plural, a technique that affirms Putin as the leader of a united and obedient government and people. Elsewhere, he writes 'I don't want to talk about our achievements, even though we have achieved something in many areas'⁹² and 'I see all of the challenges a number of our industries will face with our accession to the WTO'⁹³ – statements that present him as speaking on behalf of the government. Taken together, these two techniques subtly portray Putin as the competent leader of an obedient and unified nation and

⁸⁸ Putin, 'Rossiya Sosredotachivayetsya'.

⁸⁹ Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language?*, pp. 36.

⁹⁰ Putin, 'Rossiya i Menyayushchiysya Mir', *Moskovskiy Novosti*, 27 February 2012, <http://www.mn.ru/politics/20120227/312306749.html> (accessed 25 April 2014).

⁹¹ V. Putin, 'Demokratiya i Kachestvo Gosudarstva', *Kommersant*, 6 February 2012, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1866753> (accessed 25 April 2014).

⁹² V. Putin, 'Stroitel'stvo Spravedlivosti: Sotsial'naya Politika Dlya Rossii', *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, 13 February 2012, <http://www.kp.ru/daily/3759/2807793/> (accessed 25 April 2014).

⁹³ Putin, 'Nam Nyzhna Novaya Ekonomika'.

create the assumption that consensus exists between the government and the citizens of Russia.

Representations of the past also feature frequently in the texts, and serve three rhetorical functions. First, the depiction of Russia as possessing an unrivalled history and culture, and thus offering unique (but unspecified) input into the international system because of it, is intended to evoke sentiments of patriotism, national pride and unity. For instance, he writes,

Russia can and must play a deserving role, dictated by its civilizational model, great history, geography, and its cultural genome, which seamlessly combines the essential components of European civilization and the centuries-old experience of cooperation with the East, where new centres of economic power and political influence are currently developing rapidly.⁹⁴

This uniqueness is a key theme in all the articles and represents the basis for his claim that Russia is in a strong position to win the 'global competition.' Second, he is keen to accentuate the turmoil of the 1990s in order to demonstrate how his terms as President have brought greater stability and prosperity. Referring frequently to statistical data (particularly in his introductory article) that Russians' lives have improved under his watch, he paints a contrastingly dark picture of the early post-Soviet years. For instance,

In the 1990s, we encountered both anarchy and oligarchy. That period saw the extreme shortage of responsible statesmanship... Today, our society is very different from what it was in the early 2000s. Many people have become wealthier, better educated and more demanding.⁹⁵

This indicates that, unlike Yeltsin, he has demonstrated an abundance of 'responsible statesmanship', and thereby brought about the increase in living standards. Furthermore, he portrays his work as President as defying all the odds:

⁹⁴ Putin, 'Rossiya Sosredotachivayetsya'.

⁹⁵ Putin, 'Demokratiya i Kachestvo Gosudarstva'.

Few people remember that in the 1990s, the most respected experts, and many international leaders, agreed on one prognosis for Russia's future: bankruptcy and decay. The current situation in Russia - seen through the eyes of the 1990s – would have simply appeared as overoptimistic fiction.⁹⁶

Such statements are subtle reminders to the reader of Putin's achievements as President thus far and make it appear sensible for him to continue; they are important rhetorical tools to persuade voters to choose him. Third, he uses constructions of the past as a way of placing the blame for present-day economic and social failings beyond his sphere of responsibility. For instance, he writes 'Businessmen in our society still do not feel confident. This is largely the legacy of the 1990s.'⁹⁷ Likewise, 'Our national and immigration problems are directly linked to the collapse of the Soviet Union and, in essence, Greater Russia, whose historic foundations were built back in the 18th century.'⁹⁸ Such statements serve to obscure the fact that an inability to overcome rampant corruption and increasing xenophobic sentiment among the population can both be viewed as failures of the Putin regime, and instead places responsibility on previous governments. Overall, constructions of Russian history in Putin's texts present a strong and unified country with a unique contribution to make to international affairs and a leader who has guided the people through great tumult to a better life.

Putin envisages an important task for the citizen in Russia's attempt to win the global competition: post-Soviet citizens must shake off their passive Soviet mentality, adapt to the new competitive environment and work hard for the good of the country – which includes becoming active in local governance. However, Putin states that this will not be easy, as many Russian citizens do not demonstrate an interest in public life. He writes,

Behind general statements about cohesion and the benefits of kindness hide people's lack of trust in each other, their reluctance

⁹⁶ Putin, 'Rossiya Sosredotachivayetsya'.

⁹⁷ Putin, 'Stroitel'stvo Spravedlivosti'.

⁹⁸ V. Putin, 'Rossiya: Natsional'nyi Vopros', *Nezvisimaya Gazeta*, 23 January 2012, http://www.ng.ru/politics/2012-01-23/1_national.html (accessed 25 April 2014).

to engage in public affairs, to take care of others, and their inability to rise above their personal interests – which is a serious and a deep-rooted problem in our society.⁹⁹

Putin blames the communist legacy for this inactivity:

In the early 1990s, our society consisted of people who were free from Communism but had not yet learned to take their lives into their own hands. They still expected the state to take care of them.¹⁰⁰

However, the post-Soviet state is qualitatively different from its Soviet predecessor, not least because the era of the welfare state is over. He states, 'Welfare hand-outs without taking responsibility for one's actions are simply no longer possible in the 21st century.'¹⁰¹ The implication is that such hand-outs are antithetical to growth and that post-Soviet citizens must contribute to society in order to qualify for social security. This is a key neoliberal assumption about the welfare state and recalls the discourse promoted by international organisations. Furthermore, if citizens do not become more active, Russia will lose the global economic competition: 'But the engine of growth must be and will be the people's initiative...We are sure to lose if we rely on the passive position of the population.'¹⁰² His position implies the wholesale rejection of the logic of Soviet-era welfare state and the desire to construct a competitive, market-oriented state in which citizens operate in partnership with the authorities to provide services and develop the economy. In short, an active citizenry helps to make the state efficient domestically and competitive internationally. Again, this is precisely what the UN has advocated.

However, subtle differences between the Russian and international discourses emerge when Putin elaborates on the shape this activity should take. When Putin comes to describe his ideas for civic participation in governance, his formulations recall the pronouncements by Khrushchev in the early post-Stalin era discussed above. Putin states that civic participation should consist of

⁹⁹ Putin, 'Rossiya Sosredotachivayetsya'.

¹⁰⁰ Putin, 'Demokratiya i Kachestvo Gosudarstva'.

¹⁰¹ Putin, 'Rossiya Sosredotachivayetsya'.

¹⁰² Putin, 'Rossiya Sosredotachivayetsya'.

Political involvement, civic self-government and *kontrol'*. Above all, this means wide discussion of bills, decisions, and programs taken on every level of state power, and the evaluation of existing laws and their efficient application.¹⁰³

In other words, citizens should be able to provide feedback to the authorities on the decisions they make. Thus, the familiar role of the state as decision-maker and citizen as watchdog discussed in the first section is preserved. For instance, he writes,

Citizens and professional and public organisations must be able to 'beta-test' all state documents. Even now, constructive criticisms from professional communities such as businesspeople, teachers and scientists help us avoid poor decisions and find better ones.¹⁰⁴

Civic participation, then, is seen to comprise both deliberation and assistance, and thus recalls and expands the Soviet-era conception of *narodnyi kontrol'*. The mechanisms that should facilitate these practices are those introduced in the administrative reforms: public councils,¹⁰⁵ networks of community organisations,¹⁰⁶ internet fora for the discussion of proposed laws,¹⁰⁷ online mechanisms for citizens to bring initiatives to the government for discussion,¹⁰⁸ public hearings on the effectiveness of regional and municipal leaders,¹⁰⁹ electronic government,¹¹⁰ and the on-going support for socially oriented NGOs.¹¹¹ The following subsection discusses this conception of civic engagement in more detail.

In sum, Putin's legitimating narrative for mechanisms of civic engagement in governance recalls the international discourse of unstoppable forces of change necessitating a neoliberal reform of the public sector. However, Putin expands this

¹⁰³ Putin, 'Demokratiya i Kachestvo Gosudarstva'.

¹⁰⁴ Putin, 'Demokratiya i Kachestvo Gosudarstva'.

¹⁰⁵ Putin, 'Demokratiya i Kachestvo Gosudarstva'.

¹⁰⁶ Putin, 'Stroitel'stvo Spravedlivosti'.

¹⁰⁷ Putin, 'Demokratiya i Kachestvo Gosudarstva'.

¹⁰⁸ Putin, 'Demokratiya i Kachestvo Gosudarstva'.

¹⁰⁹ Putin, 'Demokratiya i Kachestvo Gosudarstva'.

¹¹⁰ Putin, 'Demokratiya i Kachestvo Gosudarstva'.

¹¹¹ Putin, 'Rossiya Sosredotachivayetsya'.

conception of change by emphasising its dangerous nature. This allows him to make patriotic statements about Russia's ability to overcome adversity and to present himself as a strong leader of a unified people. I now move on to discuss the role of the citizen as represented in the discourse of the Annual Presidential Address and show in more detail its similarities with the Soviet-era discourse.

Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly

The Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly is an annual speech by the President to the Federal Assembly, that is, the national legislature comprising the lower house (Duma) and the upper house (Federation Council), normally given in November or December. It is a reflection on the government's achievements and significant events of the past year and highlights policy directions for the year to come. The status of the Address is enshrined in Article 84 of the Russian Constitution, which states that the President of the Russian Federation should 'address the Federal Assembly with annual messages on the situation in the country, on the guidelines of the internal and foreign policy of the State.'¹¹² While contents of the Addresses are not legally binding, instructions are given to various government departments and the proposals made within them are often turned into policy.

I have examined all six Addresses whose full transcripts are available on the government website, Kremlin.ru, for representations of civic engagement in governance, the first four of which were given by then-President Dmitry Medvedev.¹¹³ The 2012 and 2013 Addresses were given by Vladimir Putin after his return to power following the 2012 elections. While there are some small rhetorical differences (for instance, Medvedev tends to dwell on Russia's current failings in order to rally listeners behind his programme for improvement), both leaders demonstrate the same view of the tasks facing Russia both domestically and internationally. Fundamentally, they display the same worldview that Putin espoused in his pre-election articles. The speeches contain reflections on the state of the economy, welfare, foreign policy, areas that together comprise an extensive 'modernisation' strategy, which is legitimated by a desire to compete in the

¹¹² Chapter Four, The Russian Constitution, <http://www.constitution.ru/en/10003000-05.htm> (accessed 30 April 2014).

¹¹³ See Poslaniya Federal'noy Sborniyu, Prezident Rossii, <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/messages> (accessed 30 April 2014).

international economic 'race', success at which depends in great measure on active citizens. Statements intended to rally listeners around this strategy are ubiquitous across the six speeches; however, as I have discussed the ideas of competition in the global economy in detail above, in this section I focus on the role of the citizen in this process. Excluding references to certain specific events of that year, such as the global financial crisis in 2008 and 2009, the forest fires of 2010, and the civil unrest in 2011 and 2012, there is a substantial level of continuity across all speeches, particularly with regard to the role of the citizen in governance, and it is possible to trace how these ideas are developed into concrete policies over the course of the years.

As already mentioned, the idea of an active citizenry is central to the Kremlin's vision of national renewal; it is presented as a precondition for all other reforms. However, there is clear recognition that the current condition of society is lacking. In 2009, Medvedev stated, 'Obviously, the implementation of our strategic plans is impossible without a full-scale change in society.'¹¹⁴ As such, policies had to be developed which fostered the creation of the active citizen. Three years later, Putin claimed, 'It is precisely in civic responsibility, in patriotism, that I see the basis of our policies.'¹¹⁵ The linking of civic engagement to patriotism reinforces the assumption of consensus between citizens and the government regarding the national development strategy. This strategy conceives of the individual as the primary source of energy and ideas who can create innovations that benefit the economy and advance Russia internationally. The assumption is that citizens will invest their energy into state-designed goals and programmes. Thus, a vital task for the Kremlin was to foster the creation of individuals who would be likely to help Russia become competitive.

According to the Kremlin, civic engagement in governance should be based on Russia's historic traditions. In a rare discussion of democracy, the on-going monitoring of the authorities is seen as part of a uniquely Russian tradition of governance, and one that should be developed and extended. In 2012, Putin stated,

Russian democracy is the rule (*vlast'*) of the Russian people, with its own traditions of national government. It is not the

¹¹⁴ Federal Assembly 2009.

¹¹⁵ Federal Assembly 2012.

implementation of standards imposed on us from outside...
Democracy is not only an opportunity to choose the government,
but the power to constantly monitor (*kontrolirovat'*) and evaluate
the results of its work. We should devote more attention to the
development of direct democracy [*priyamoj demokrati*], of direct
rule by the people [*neposredstvennogo narodovlastiya*]...¹¹⁶

Two formulations of direct democracy are used here, the first utilising a semantic translation of the Greek and now global concept, democracy, and the second employing a more traditional Russian formulation taken from people (*narod*) and power (*vlast'*), whose roots lie in the thought of the early democratic slavophiles of the Nineteenth Century.¹¹⁷ The first evokes a Western ensemble of democratic practices, while the latter evokes the idea of a people unified with the authorities, of a consensual operation of power. By listing one after the other, Putin is also equating them. This plays down any links between civic participation and competitive or electoral democracy and instead places the emphasis on traditional Russian governance norms.

The idea of civic engagement as citizens unified among themselves and with the state is developed later in the same speech. Putin states, 'The norms of civic engagement are developing. People are begin to relate their lives and their work to caring for others, the aspirations of the people (*narod*) and the interests of the state.'¹¹⁸ Here, Putin presents the interests of state and society as being the same and civic engagement means the carrying out of these interests. The implication is that the role of the citizens is to join together with the authorities in order to fulfil centrally-determined tasks. Crucially, it recalls the consensual relationship embodied in the concepts of *rabochyi* and *narodnyi kontrol'* discussed in the first section – but expands it to include the execution of the will of the state.

Three reasons are given for the importance of increasing the role of citizens in governance. Firstly and most centrally, as mentioned above, citizens are seen as a cornerstone of economic development, as the people who will come up with the ideas, inventions and discoveries that will help Russia gain its competitive edge

¹¹⁶ Federal Assembly 2012.

¹¹⁷ P. Reddaway and D. Glinski, *The Tragedy of Russia's Reforms: Market Bolshevism Against Democracy* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 2001), pp. 53; See also I. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe* (London: Routledge, 1996).

¹¹⁸ Federal Assembly 2012.

internationally. While they should be autonomous and independent, not waiting for 'state tutelage', they should also realise that if they are successful, the state too will be successful.¹¹⁹ Thus, part of their motivation to succeed should come from the desire to advance their nation. Secondly, civic participation is also seen as an anti-corruption measure: 'Necessary for the effective fight against corruption is active civic participation and effective *obshchestvennyi kontrol*'.¹²⁰ Corruption is described as a scourge, as a social ill that requires all hands on deck in order to defeat it and implies that citizens should be able to monitor state activity, much the same as the Soviet citizen inspectors. Thirdly, citizen involvement in governance is considered a means for shrinking the Soviet-era bureaucracy and making it more efficient. NGOs are seen as important service providers thanks to their high levels of expertise:

In modernizing the system of public services, we must pay special attention to the provision of social services. I think that we need to get NGOs on board here. They often know the situation on the ground better than the authorities and have unique experience in helping people in difficult situations.¹²¹

In order to achieve these three goals, the later speeches call for the introduction of numerous measures through which citizens can become involved in governance. As discussed in Chapter One, these can be split into three categories: the PCB network, socially oriented NGOs and e-government. Each involves a slightly different relationship between the authorities and the citizens. The PCB network is intended to monitor the authorities and combat corruption; e-government is intended to bring the mechanisms of the state closer to its citizens and expose corruption; NGOs are intended to perform tasks on behalf of the state, reducing inefficiency and state bureaucracy. Taken together they demonstrate a clear role for the citizen in governance: to assist the state in the fulfilment of pre-determined tasks. The distinction between state decision-maker and citizen assistant remains.

¹¹⁹ Federal Assembly 2008.

¹²⁰ Federal Assembly 2012.

¹²¹ Federal Assembly 2010.

Conclusion

In this section, I have shown that Putin represents the citizen's role in governance as a patriotic duty to help the state become more globally competitive. This role is justified with recourse to the idea that the old welfare regime needs to be dismantled and new market mechanisms must be introduced, a narrative that directly recalls the discourse of the intergovernmental institutions discussed in section two. In both Russian state and international discourses, increasing involvement by citizens should decrease corruption, reform the bloated state bureaucracy and enhance innovation. In contrast to the international discourse, however, Putin's discourse has a strong normative understanding of the relationship between the citizen and the authorities: the citizen should unite with the state to fulfil common tasks which have been decided by the state for the benefit of all. This conception has its roots in Soviet discourses of *narodnyi kontrol'*, which had a similar understanding of the citizen's duty vis-à-vis the state: both contemporary and Soviet conceptions saw the citizen as the state's assistant; however, in Putin's version, the citizen must not merely ensure that state orders are being fulfilled but also orient her actions to the interests of the state more broadly. Furthermore, Putin's affirmation of Russia's great history and unique culture, his use of words and phrases that evoke Russia's own traditions of governance as opposed to Western ones, and his authoritative self-positioning as obvious leader in his pre-election articles (despite the fact that the elections had not yet occurred) all echo elements of Soviet-era governance. This makes it easy for Russian listeners to accept the slippages between discourses of neoliberal state restructuring and *narodnyi kontrol'*.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the Kremlin's discourse of civic engagement in governance, presented its legitimating narrative for the introduction of new participatory mechanisms and have shown that the roots of this discourse lie in elements of Soviet-era and international discourses of governance.

To consider the contemporary discourse, civic engagement in governance is portrayed as the duty of patriotic citizens who join forces with the authorities in order to produce innovations and perform socially beneficial tasks. It presupposes a consensual relationship among citizens as well as between citizens and the

authorities. This builds on the Soviet-era discourse of *narodnyi kontrol'*, which conceived of citizens as volunteer administrators for the authorities, checking the implementation of state policy and channelling public opinion regarding policy back to the authorities. In both discourses, the relationship between citizens and the state is conceived as harmonious and apolitical. Since citizens do not have the opportunity to challenge the legitimacy of the authorities or the decisions they make, state and society become a single collective directed by the authorities. Furthermore, the use of the concept *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* to capture the practices of civic participation in contemporary Russia makes a direct link with the Soviet past, which used concepts of *rabochyi* and *narodnyi kontrol'* to refer to activities of checking, monitoring and assisting local authorities.

Considering the legitimating narrative, I have shown that the Kremlin's vision is legitimated according to a rationale of economic competitiveness: citizens are encouraged to believe that public activity leads to self-improvement, which in turn means that the country will gain a competitive edge internationally. This is what sets the contemporary discourse apart from its Soviet predecessor. As such, citizens are exhorted to shake off Soviet era passivity and get involved in governance, since civic engagement is the cornerstone of a successful state. The proposed institutional innovations aimed at increasing civic participation are presented as a strategy intended to decrease corruption, down-size the Soviet-era public sector and stimulate innovative policy. They thus recall the neoliberal reform agendas advanced by the intergovernmental organisations, which presented civic participation in governance as a central element of good governance, defined as a means to enhance economic development. I argued that Russia has been influenced by this discourse through on-going engagement with these organisations. The use of this discourse as a legitimating narrative demonstrates that the emergence of PCBs should be seen as part of the market reform of the Russian public sector: the Kremlin explicitly places the development of PCBs in the context of bureaucratic reform.

This discussion of the combination of Soviet-era and international discourses in contemporary Russian discourses of civic engagement highlights two further points. First, it draws attention to the lasting legacy of Soviet modes of thinking and being on contemporary political actors. The fact that Russia's leaders encourage citizens to abandon their Soviet mentality by engaging in practices that directly recall

Soviet-era governance demonstrates that although Marxist-Leninist ideology has been discredited, the practices and identities forged through this ideology continue to be reproduced in contemporary social life. Second, it demonstrates the enormous flexibility and resilience of the neoliberal project. It shows that market principles can even be combined with elements of ideas that were once considered their polar opposites, Soviet collectivism. As mentioned in the introduction, this suggests that there is a certain amount of congruence between the two discourses: both conceive of citizens as willing assistants to the state. In the following chapter I give a deeper exposition of the concept of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, as it is understood both by the Kremlin and by civic groups. I show that the Kremlin's conception is consistent with its broader discourse of civic engagement discussed in this chapter, but that some citizens' groups have operationalised a considerably more confrontational conception in order to challenge the Putin regime. It is, however, the Kremlin's version that has been codified in law.

Chapter Four: Hegemony

The concept of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* and the discourse of civic participation in governance have been operationalised by social groups and activists since the collapse of the Soviet Union to campaign for social change, hold corrupt authorities to account and encourage other citizens to become politically engaged. Similar in many ways to the Factory Commissions in the early days of the revolution, activists have been creating their own institutions that enact an autonomous understanding of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, one which envisages a critical, empowered public, able to constrain state power and hold it accountable before the law. However, similar to the response by the Bolsheviks to the Factory Commissions, the present-day authorities have mostly succeeded in co-opting this grass-roots discourse and gutting the corresponding institutions of their independence. The Kremlin, advocating a harmonious relationship between the authorities and citizens with the latter subservient to the former (as discussed in the previous chapter), has recently legally enshrined the possible operationalisations of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* in order to fix the field of meaning of the discourse, and hence the practices, of civic engagement in governance. In this way, despite sporadic challenges of various intensities 'from below', this conception remains hegemonic.

What is understood by 'hegemony' in this context? According to CDA, it is a 'struggle for the dominance of political language.'¹ In other words, it is the ideological work conducted in the public sphere by competing groups who are 'seeking to universalize particular meanings in the service of achieving and maintaining dominance.'² This conception draws heavily on Antonio Gramsci who saw hegemony as the ongoing manufacture of public consent in the incumbent regime by everyday cultural machines. He saw this consent as being forged in the populace through their socialisation and participation in orthodox social institutions, such as schools, churches and trade unions.³ Thus, part of maintaining the socio-political *status quo* involves practices of 'cultural and ethical engineering, the reshaping of

¹ Fairclough, *New Labour, New Language?* pp. 3.

² Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, pp. 58.

³ See J. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 26.

subjectivities or ‘selves’ to educate citizens in actively upholding the existing order.⁴ This desire to ‘reshape subjectivities’ is evident in the Kremlin’s discourse of civic participation, which, as shown in the previous chapter, seeks to mould citizens into engaged but obedient assistants. In order for alternative representations to overthrow the dominant discourse, Gramsci states that ‘a war of position’ must be waged in the public sphere; that is, an on-going, organised movement among everyday citizens that encourages them to question their consent and to create alternative, independent institutions.

This chapter investigates the struggle between citizens and authorities over the meaning of *obshchestvennyi kontrol*. It examines both the ‘war of position’ on the Kremlin’s usage of *obshchestvennyi kontrol* by activists, social movements and NGOs, as well as the ways in which the Kremlin co-opts organic civic movements by redefining and codifying the concepts they use. It therefore undertakes two parallel tasks: first, it shows how citizen initiatives both represent alternative conceptions of *obshchestvennyi kontrol* in discourse and operationalise them through grass-roots institutions and, second, it traces processes of subordination of ‘bottom-up’ discourses to the state’s hegemonic conceptions through the codification in law of the practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol*.

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first part, I trace the first institutionalisation of *obshchestvennyi kontrol* into the Russian legal codex through an examination of Law No. 76 ‘On the Public Scrutiny (*Obshchestvennom Kontrole*) of the Protection of Human Rights in Places of Detention and Assistance to Persons in Places of Detention’. I show how what began as a citizens’ initiative to monitor conditions in prisons was co-opted into the state-run PCB network. In the second part, I examine the mass citizens’ movement to conduct *obshchestvennyi kontrol* of the December 2010 and March 2011 elections, paying particular attention to civic understandings of this concept. I show that these understandings played a key role in the mobilisation of citizens in the wake of the elections, which led to a dual-pronged response by the authorities, on the one hand making modest concessions to the movement, on the other passing legislation to deter further protests. In the third part, I outline the development of the draft law ‘On the Foundations of *Obshchestvennyi Kontrol* in the Russian Federation’, and argue that it is an attempt to fix the meaning of *obshchestvennyi kontrol*, and thereby maintain the hegemony

⁴ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 128.

of state discourse of civic engagement. The chapter shows how citizens' attempts to put into practice a critical understanding of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* are co-opted by the state and re-defined in law to become mechanisms of authoritarian neoliberal governance.⁵

Obshchestvennyi Kontrol' of Prisons

The first institutionalisation of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* in Russian legislation sought to codify the practice of monitoring prison conditions, which human rights activists (*pravozashchitniki*) had been conducting informally since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Conceptualised by activists during the liberal, unrestrained political atmosphere of the mid 1990s and introduced into the Duma in 1999, the bill was passed back and forth between its authors, the Duma and the Federation Council for nearly ten years before then-President Dmitry Medvedev eventually signed its third incarnation into law in June 2008. Law No. 76 'On *Obshchestvennyi Kontrol'* of the Protection of Human Rights in Places of Detention and Assistance to Persons in Places of Detention' authorised the creation of Public Monitoring Commissions (*Obshchestvennyye Nabludatel'nyye Komissii*) through which NGO members could oversee conditions in prisons and other places of detention. The history of the development of this law exemplifies both the tension between state and non-state understandings of the practice of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* and the process of state-driven co-optation of civic initiatives. In this section, I detail this history, showing how what began as a project to create an independent institution through which civic activists could hold prison authorities accountable to the law ended up as another node in the network of authoritarian neoliberal governance. The final version of the law has enshrined a conception of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* which prioritised *sodeistviye* (assistance) over scrutiny, as well as eviscerated PMCs' independence by allowing the authorities to retain a substantial amount of

⁵ It is important to remember that the civic operationalisations of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* I discuss below are prominent moments of conceptual struggle that have shaped state discourse surrounding *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* and have resulted in federal-level legislative action by the state. The concept of *kontrol'* has, of course, been employed by numerous NGOs to articulate both their activities and their relationship to the authorities, with prominent examples including *Grazhdanskiy Kontrol'* (Citizens' Oversight) and *Fond "Obshchestvennyi Verdikt"* (Public Verdict Foundation). They, as well as other NGOs, frequently work together with local, regional and in some cases federal authorities as expert advisors or collaborators on joint projects, often helping to shape state policy, albeit modestly. The examples discussed here I consider to be central to understanding the 'struggle for meaning' over the concept of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, not representative of civic engagement with the authorities as such.

control over membership selection processes and removing some of their critical functions.

Russian prisons are infamously squalid: their appearance has changed little since the GULAG was dismantled in 1956.⁶ Tuberculosis and other infectious diseases are rife, a significant number of inmates are living with HIV/AIDS, corruption among prison authorities is widespread, and while instances of torture are decreasing, it is still 'far from rare.'⁷ Police arrest almost 2 million people per year, with over a quarter of a million held in pre-trial detention centres that are often very overcrowded. While a quarter of those are later released, it is not uncommon to remain in custody awaiting trial for three years before going to court.⁸ From an international comparative perspective, the number of people behind bars per 100,000 is higher only in the USA.⁹

As discussed in the previous chapter, international discourses of governance were important in bolstering domestic institutional development. On 28 February 1996, Russia joined the Council of Europe and was encouraged to adopt the European Prison Rules, which set out a list of recommendations for the humane management of prisons. The recommendations began with an acknowledgement of the necessity to respect prisoners' human rights and included a clause stating, 'The conditions of detention and the treatment of prisoners shall be monitored by an independent body or bodies whose findings shall be made public.'¹⁰ This encouraged activists – who had been visiting prisons unofficially throughout the 1990s – to begin the process of legally instating institutions, which would fulfil this criterion.¹¹

There were four main proponents of the law on Public Monitoring Commissions, Andrey Babushkin, Valentin Gefter, Valery Borshchyov and Lev Ponomaryov, each of whom were liberal-leaning, pro-democracy activists, and had

⁶ L. Piancentini, *Surviving Russian Prisons: Punishment, Economy and Politics in Transition*, (Cullompton: Willan Publishing, 2004).

⁷ R. Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 77.

⁸ Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, pp. 77.

⁹ 'Prison Population Around the Globe', *The New York Times*, 19 July 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2008/04/22/us/20080423_PRISON_GRAPHIC.html?_r=0 (accessed 21 August 2013).

¹⁰ 'Recommendation Rec(2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the European Prison Rules', *The Council of Europe*, 11 January 2006, <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=955747> (accessed 21 August 2013).

¹¹ I.V. Chetverikova, 'Institutsionalizatsiya Obshchestvennogo Kontrolya Sobliudeniya Prav Cheloveka v Mestakh Prinuditel'nogo Soderzhaniya (V Ramkakh Nabiudatel'nykh Kommissii)', Master's Thesis, European University at St Petersburg, 2011.

been involved in progressive politics since the *perestroika* era, if not earlier. Babushkin initiated the development of the bill on prison inspectors and, authored the first draft in collaboration with a liberal-minded judge. In 1997, Borshchyov introduced it into the State Duma, where it garnered the support of over 300 members of the various political parties.¹² The bill suggested the creation of a federal-level prison-monitoring organisation that would be composed of 50 volunteers from NGOs specialising in prisoners' rights and appointed by the Federal Human Rights Ombudsman. The volunteers were to operationalise *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* by making planned and unplanned inspections of prisons and other detention centres, publishing reports based on their findings and making recommendations to the authorities for improvement. This conception drew much inspiration from the Inspectorate of Prisons for England and Wales, an independent body whose Chief Inspector is appointed by and answerable to the UK's Justice Secretary; it was given as an example of good practice by Borshchyov during the bill's first reading.¹³

Government departments were split over the proposals. At first, the Prison Service itself was supportive as they saw the volunteers as a means to lessen their own workload, initially offering to include the volunteers in discussions about parole¹⁴ (although this later changed due to conflict between head of the Prison Service Yuri Kalinin and several prominent human rights activists including the bill's authors¹⁵). President Yeltsin's view was largely negative, as the law invested a large amount of power in the Human Rights Ombudsman, a post that should function independently of the government. The Ombudsman at the time was Oleg Mironov, a member of the Communist Party, and the President was reluctant to strengthen his position.¹⁶ The Duma as a whole was sceptical of the role invested by the bill in NGOs, believing that non-state institutions did not have the right to interfere with

¹² 'Pravozashchitniki "probyvayut bresh"' v penitentsiarnoi sisteme: Kogo budut kontrolirovat' obshchestvennyye inspektory?', *Informatsionno-politicheskii Biulleten' Partii Yabloko*, No. 11 (47), August 2003, <http://www.yabloko.ru/Publ/2003/Bulletin/200308-11/gazeta1147020.html> (accessed 20 August 2013).

¹³ Chetverikova, 'Institutsionalizatsiya Obshchestvennogo Kontrolya Sobliudeniya Prav Cheloveka v Mestakh Prinuditel'nogo Soderzhaniya (V Ramkakh Nabiudatel'nykh Kommissii)'.

¹⁴ Chetverikova, 'Institutsionalizatsiya Obshchestvennogo Kontrolya Sobliudeniya Prav Cheloveka v Mestakh Prinuditel'nogo Soderzhaniya (V Ramkakh Nabiudatel'nykh Kommissii)'.

¹⁵ A. Kornya, 'Yuri Kalinin: "Rebyata, Vy Provalilis' Vo Vremeni"', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 3 August 2004, http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2004-08-03/1_kalinin.html (accessed 22 August 2013).

¹⁶ Chetverikova, 'Institutsionalizatsiya Obshchestvennogo Kontrolya Sobliudeniya Prav Cheloveka v Mestakh Prinuditel'nogo Soderzhaniya (V Ramkakh Nabiudatel'nykh Kommissii)'.

government activities.¹⁷ Already it was becoming clear that the government saw citizen inspectors as valuable only insofar as they could assist them in their work; provisions in the law that suggested independence and critical capacity were eschewed.

Various incarnations were debated throughout the end of the 1990s and beginning of 2000s but stalled chiefly due to disagreements on the way the Commissions should be formed. In response to the government's concerns regarding the Ombudsman, Borshchyov had presented a model that devolved PMC formation to the regional level. However, this version was also rejected by the Duma as Yeltsin had made it known that he favoured a federal-level institution: devolution would have given regional governors, rather than central authorities, influence over the formation and activities of the commissions.

Discussions were eventually put on hold in 2003. In the following years, discourses of democracy and human rights were subjected to increasing attacks by the political mainstream: regional gubernatorial elections were abolished, members of the Federation Council were appointed directly by the President, and the Duma was transformed into a 'rubber stamp' organisation for the approval of the Kremlin's initiatives.¹⁸ Furthermore, the attitude towards non-governmental organisations also changed, as exemplified in Vladislav Surkov's so-called 'Fifth Column' interview, in which he slammed liberals and fascists as 'having more and more in common with each other as time goes by.'¹⁹ In 2006, burdensome reporting requirements for NGOs with heavy penalties were introduced and a media campaign spearheaded by the FSB vilified NGOs associated with Western actors.

Nonetheless, in 2007, state interest was renewed in the bill as discourses of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* and civic engagement in governance were popularised through the administrative reforms.²⁰ An important amendment was made to the bill,

¹⁷ Chetverikova, 'Institutsionalizatsiya Obshchestvennogo Kontrolya Sobliudeniya Prav Cheloveka v Mestakh Prinuditel'nogo Soderzhaniya (V Ramkakh Nabiudatel'nykh Kommissii)'; M. Torocheshnikova, 'Zakon ob Obshchestvennom Kontrole', Radio Svoboda, 9 June 2003, <http://www.index.org.ru/turma/ic/2003/106/632-3.htm> (accessed 23 August 2013).

¹⁸ Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, pp. 197.

¹⁹ L. Kaftan, 'Zamestitel' Glavy Administratsii RF Vladislav Surkov: Putin Ukreplayet Gosudarstvo a Ne Sebya', *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, 28 September 2004, <http://www.kp.ru/daily/23370/32473/> (accessed 12 April 2013).

²⁰ See for instance, 'Zaklyucheniye na proyekt Federal'nogo Zakona No. 11807-3 "Ob obshchestvennom kontrole za obespecheniyem prav cheloveka v mestakh prinuditel'nogo soderzhaniya i o sodeistvii obshchestvennykh obyedinenii ikh deyatel'nosti"', Obshchestvennaya Palata Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 27 April 2007, <http://www.oprf.ru/documents/resolutions/newsitem/7505> (accessed 5 August 2014).

which linked PMCs to the growing network of PCBs: the recently created Federal Public Chamber, a third of whose members are directly chosen by the President, was to appoint the PMC volunteers. This amendment was seen by the human rights community to have serious potential consequences for the Commissions' independence.²¹ As discussed in Chapter One, the Public Chamber is the first and most influential of Russia's corporatist bodies and aims to unify government and non-government interests in a 'social partnership.'²² According to a member of Moscow PMC, 'Public Chambers want to enrol people in the commissions who will be peaceful and won't make a fuss.'²³ The Human Rights Ombudsman, Vladimir Lukin, by contrast, is very well-regarded by the human rights community²⁴ and the Ombudsman institution is generally seen as more active and independent than the Public Chamber and may have encouraged a more critical PMC membership.²⁵ However, the shift of responsibility from the Ombudsman to the Chamber satisfied sceptics in the Duma and Federation Council and the bill became law the following year.

As it stands, Law No. 76 allows members of organisations whose charter specifies protecting rights (up to two from each organisation) to submit an application to the Public Chamber to join a PMC through which members enact *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* of prisons. This involves checking there is adequate food, space, medical facilities, and so on, making recommendations to prison authorities for improvement, and assisting them in the enforcement of human rights. This is to be done via the inspection of detention facilities, followed by the preparation of recommendations for improvement to the facility authorities, and the handling of complaints from inmates. In these respects, the law does not diverge from the initial proposals made by Borshchyov and his colleagues.

²¹ 'Kontrol' Prav Cheloveka v Tyur'me Otdadut pod Ontvestvennost' Obshchestvennoi Palate', *Polit.ru*, 16 April 2008, <http://polit.ru/news/2008/04/16/op/> (accessed 23 August 2013).

²² A. Sungurov, 'Instituty Mediatory v Sovremennoi Rossii: Sluchai Saratovskoi Oblasti', *Politeks*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2012); see also J. Richter, 'The Ministry of Civil Society? The Public Chamber and the Russian Regions', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 56, No. 6 (Nov-Dec 2009); E. Belokurova, 'NGOs and Politics in Russia's Regions' in V. Gel'man C. and Ross (eds.) *The Politics of Subnational Authoritarianism in Russia* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010) pp. 116.

²³ Interview M12.

²⁴ Interview M15.

²⁵ L. Petrova and A. Sungurov, 'Instituty- Posredniki Mezhdru Organami Vlasti I Obshchestvom: Sluchai Sankt-Peterburga', *Voprosy Gosudarstvennogo i Munitsipal'nogo Upravleniya* (2012) No. 2; A. Sungurov, O. Zakharova, L. Petrova and N. Raspopov, 'Instituty Mediatory i ikh Razvitiye v Sovremennoi Rossii: Obshchestvennyye Palaty i Konsul'tativnyye Sovety: Federal'nyi i Regional'nyi Opyt', *Politicheskiye Issledovaniya: POLIS*, 2012, No. 1.

However, the law eviscerated the independence of the commissions in six ways, and ensured that this operationalisation remained hegemonic by preventing activists from performing *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* of prisons if they do not belong to a PMC. First, it states that, on one hand, PMC members' main task is to monitor Russia's detention centres and publish recommendations for improvement based on their findings, on the other, PMCs are 'to promote the implementation of the state policy in the field of human rights in places of detention.'²⁶ It is not clear how an institution intended to promote state policy can independently monitor it at the same time. This contradiction reinforces public inspectors as assistants to the state, not as the independent watchdogs conceived by the *pravozashchitniki*. In this sense, it recalls the Soviet conceptions of *kontrol'* as accounting discussed in the previous chapter.

Second, compounding their status as assistants, the law requires PMC members to work closely with a string of government bodies: the prison authorities, with whom PMC members must discuss any immediate complaints and recommendations, as well as arrange visits; the regional executive authorities, which handle more serious complaints by the PMC regarding violations at the facility; the regional Public Chamber which organises training seminars and round tables and which can be involved in the selection process; and the human rights ombudsman, who provides material and other support. This close and often integrated work with government bodies means, first, that it is in the Public Chamber's interests to select members with whom they know the authorities can work well and, second, that it becomes much more difficult for PMC members to take a critical position on conditions inside detention facilities. The risk is that PMCs become co-opted into the very institution that they have been created to monitor.

Third, it does not contain a definition of 'human rights organisation' - and most organisations claim to protect the rights of their members. As such, organisations which have at best a tangential relation to human rights work – and at worst, may actively hinder the protection of human rights in prisons – have been accepted into the commissions, thereby affecting the capacity for the PMC to act efficiently and independently. For instance, during the selection process of the second convocation

²⁶ 'Federal'nyi Zakon ot 10.06.2008 No 76-F3 (Red ot 06.12.11), Ob Obshchestvennom Kontrole za Obespecheniyem Prav Cheloveka V Mestakh Prinuditel'nogo Soderzhaniya i Sodeistvii Litsam Nakhodyashchimsya v Mestakh Prinuditel'nogo Soderzhaniya', *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 18 June 2008, <http://www.rg.ru/2008/06/18/prava-cheloveka-dok.html> (accessed 30 July 2014).

of PMCs in 2010, human rights activists were rejected in favour of members of organisations for veterans of law enforcement agencies, among which is the Federal Penitentiary Service, the very institution the PMCs are supposed to be monitoring.²⁷

Fourth, in one paragraph the law states that PMC members can arrive for an inspection without prior warning, but in another paragraph it contradicts itself and states that prior warning must be given before PMC members arrive at a detention centre for a spot check. According to this paragraph, a letter must be sent in advance stating the time of the visit, the intended goals and the full names of the inspectors. As a result, different practices have developed in different regions, with some facilities demanding a whole day's notice, thus giving authorities the chance to put things in order before the inspectors arrive.²⁸ It also gives grounds for authorities to refuse the inspectors entry to the facility or make life hard for them in other ways.²⁹

Fifth, the final version of the law removed the possibility for PMC members to talk to inmates without a member of prison staff present. This has made it very difficult for inmates to lodge a complaint without fear of reprisal by prison guards afterwards. In the words of one St Petersburg PMC member, 'Whichever inmate dares to tell of any crimes will pay for it later.'³⁰

Sixth, the fact that NGOs must cover the expenses of PMC members from their organisation means that those with few funds can take part. The most well-funded organisations tend to be veterans' organisations and women's groups from the Soviet era with close links to the government and will therefore be less likely to enact a critical public scrutiny of detention facilities.

When the law was passed, Borshchyov called it 'very, very spoilt'.³¹ Prominent activist and Russia's first human rights ombudsman, Sergei Kovalyov, called it 'emasculated'.³² In autumn 2010, after the second round of PMC members were selected with more former officials in the Commissions, a group of activists from Memorial wrote a letter to the Public Chamber highlighting the difference

²⁷ Memorial, 'Appeal to the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation', <http://www.memo.ru/eng/news/2010/11/17/1711103.htm> (accessed 13 April 2013).

²⁸ Interview SPB5.

²⁹ Interview SPB6.

³⁰ Interview SPB7.

³¹ 'Razvorot: Yes' Li Prava Zakliuchyonykh?' *Ekho Moskvy*, 23 April 2008, <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/razvorot/509516-echo/> (accessed 13 April 2013).

³² 'Pravozashchitniki "probyvayut bresh"' *Informatsionno-politicheskii Biulleten' Partii Yabloko*.

between state and non-state conceptions of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, asking it to remember that

The spirit and meaning of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* consist in defending the rights of people deprived of freedom, not in guaranteeing membership in public commissions to the power structures in order to control these very commissions.³³

Overall, there are currently 729 PMC members working in 79 Russian regions,³⁴ of whom 20% are considered by human rights activists to be 'independent' – that is, not affiliated in some way with the Federal Penitentiary Service.³⁵ Fewer than 20 commissions have any independent members at all.³⁶ There are three regions that do not yet have a commission, and in some regions there are so few people that it is impossible to visit all the facilities.³⁷ And the second composition 'is full of very conservative people'³⁸; as such, there have been fewer overall recommendations by PMC members to the authorities for improvements within prisons since the Commissions' second term began.³⁹

In sum, the conception of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* codified in the law differs substantially from that campaigned for by human rights activists during the 1990s. The 'bottom-up' understanding, which envisaged *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* performed by a critical and independent body capable of holding detention centre authorities to account, has been undermined by the creation of institutions that endorse the *status quo*. This has been achieved by linking the bodies to the existing PCB network, requiring them to work as assistants to the Federal Penitentiary Service and enabling former prison officials to stand in the commissions, as well as through the vague and contradictory wording of the law. As such, *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, as enshrined in the law, refers to a set of practices through which citizens can support the Federal Penitentiary Service in the operations of Russia's prisons,

³³ Memorial, 'Appeal to the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation'.

³⁴ ONK.RF, <http://onk.su/> (accessed 14th April 2013).

³⁵ Interview M10.

³⁶ Interview M14.

³⁷ M. Solopov, 'Partii Otpravlyat v Kolonii', *Gazeta.ru*, 15th March 2013, <http://m.gazeta.ru/social/2013/03/14/5057581.shtml> (accessed 15th April 2013).

³⁸ Interview M10.

³⁹ Chetverikova, 'Institutsionalizatsiya Obshchestvennogo Kontrolya Soblyudeniya Prav Cheloveka v Mestakh Prinuditel'nogo Soderzhaniya (V Ramkakh Nablyudatel'nykh Kommissii)'.

almost as volunteer branches. A PMC's critical capacity now depends on how far individual members have the time and psychological resilience to confront negligence, rather than legally enshrined critical capacity (though I show in Chapter Five that active members can still influence state practices inside prisons). What began as a movement for critical civic engagement in governance ended in the creation of another node in the network of authoritarian neoliberal governance. Furthermore, this law, as the first inscription of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* into the legal codex, set a precedent for the codification of this concept in other spheres of governance and the co-optation of other bottom-up initiatives of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* into the PCB network. In the following section, I discuss citizens' discourse and operationalisation of this concept in detail.

Obshchestvennyi Kontrol' of Elections

The discourse advanced by the citizen-led movement to monitor the December 2011 Parliamentary and March 2012 Presidential elections represents a second example of a 'bottom-up' conception of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* that promoted a critical, rather than co-operative, relationship between citizen monitors and the authorities. However, this time, instead of promotion by a group of professional experts used to dealing with the state, this discourse was operationalised via 'unprecedented' numbers of regular citizens who signed up to become election observers.⁴⁰ Alongside other semiotic strategies promoted by the anti-systemic opposition in the run-up to the elections (such as the diffusion across the internet of the slogans, 'Vote for any party but United Russia' and 'United Russia – the Party of Crooks and Thieves'), the promotion of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* of elections served to engage large numbers of citizens in the political process. The dissemination of reports of widespread electoral fraud helped to fuel growing anti-Putin sentiment across Russian society, particularly among the urban middle classes who felt disillusioned with Medvedev's empty rhetoric on modernization and the rule of law and betrayed by the Kremlin's revelation that Medvedev had agreed to step aside for Putin to return to the Presidency.⁴¹ Taken together, the opposition-

⁴⁰ 'Vybornye-2012: Smozhet li kolichestvo nabludatelei obespechit' ikh kachestvo?', *RIA Novosti*, 02 March 2012, http://ria.ru/vybor2012_hod_vyborov/20120302/584086910.html (accessed 18 April 2014).

⁴¹ V. Gel'man, 'Cracks in the Wall: Challenges to Electoral Authoritarianism in Russia', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 60, No. 2, (March-April 2013).

led mobilisation of discourses of civic engagement helped to engender the largest mass demonstrations since the collapse of the Soviet Union and brought about some modest political concessions by the regime (as well as more restrictive legislation).⁴² This contrasts sharply with the Kremlin-led representation that civic engagement in politics consists of citizens assisting the authorities.

In this section, I focus on the discourse of citizen observers of the elections, interrogating the meaning of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* as they employ it. Since citizens' groups, media outlets and bloggers have produced vast amounts of discourse on this subject during this time, I have chosen to examine a single text, which I consider to be a paradigmatic example of citizen-led conceptions of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*. The text is a book entitled *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli* (Angry Observers), a collection of citizen observers' experiences published by the first citizens' election monitoring group, *Grazhdanin Nablyudatel'* (Citizen Observer).⁴³ Following Norman Fairclough, I have separated my analysis of its meaning into three analytical moments: the production of the text, the text itself and the reception of the text.⁴⁴ This tripartite approach to meaning raises three corresponding questions: first, what is known about the authors, i.e., the citizen observers, (and other questions of intentionality); second, what meanings are contained within the text itself; and, third, how has it been received, i.e., who are the readers, and how have they rearticulated these meanings. Such an approach, consistent with CDA epistemology, highlights the co-constitutive relationship between discourse and action. In other words, it enables me to explore the subaltern meaning of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, show how it was put into practice by activists, and consider the effects these practices had on the both on the governing practices of the regime and on its conception of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*.

In what follows below, I answer these questions in reverse order. With the aim of first giving some political context to the text before approaching the meanings contained within it, I discuss the political events surrounding its publication, showing how the practice of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* of elections and the dissemination of information about violations led to street protests. I then analyse the chosen text in

⁴² L. Shevtsova, 'Putinism Under Siege: Implosion, Atrophy or Revolution?', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 23, No. 3, (July 2012); G. Robertson, 'Russian Protesters: Not Optimistic But Here to Stay', *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 115, 20 June 2012.

⁴³ D. Antonov, (ed.), *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli: Fal'sifikatsii Parlamenskikh Vyborov Glazami Ochevidtsev*, (Moscow: Novoye Literaturnoye Obozreniye, 2012).

⁴⁴ Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, pp. 10.

detail, sketching out the representations of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* contained within it. I finish with reflections on the identities of the citizen observers themselves. I show that rather than the consensual relationship between citizens and the authorities implicit within the Kremlin's representation of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, here the understanding is critical and antagonistic, with the concept conceived as a means for holding the authorities accountable to the law and, if necessary, forcing them to alter their behaviour in accordance with it. Observers who had not necessarily been activists prior to the elections in several cases became politicised as a result of their experiences.

The *Grazhdanin Nablyudatel'* project is situated clearly within the context of Russia's anti-systemic opposition. In August 2011, the liberal, regime-critical newspaper, *Novaya Gazeta*, and Russia's only domestic independent election-monitoring organisation, GOLOS, set up *Grazhdanin Nablyudatel'* through which grass-roots, non-party organisations were established across the country with the aim of training citizen volunteers to enact *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* of the voting process at polling stations that winter. In the run up to the parliamentary elections on December 4, the volunteers were provided with training in Russian electoral law, how to monitor both ballot casting and vote counting and how to handle perceived violations. On the day, observers were sent in groups of three to polling stations, a support hotline was set up, and 'mobile groups' of volunteers were dispatched to provide physical assistance to observers in problem polling stations.⁴⁵ According to the project's website, more than one thousand citizen observers took part in the monitoring process with *Grazhdanin Nablyudatel'* during the December elections.⁴⁶

The volunteers recorded numerous violations, including ballot stuffing, miscounting of the ballots by polling station staff and 'carousel voting' (the practice of bussing voters from polling station to polling station in order to cast votes at each)⁴⁷, writing formal complaints to both local electoral commissions and the Central Electoral Commission, in some instances notifying the police.⁴⁸ However, such complaints were frequently inconsequential. Much more effectual was the dissemination of violations in the media, thereby raising public consciousness and eventually forcing the government to respond. Since NGOs are barred from

⁴⁵ See Antonov, *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 25.

⁴⁶ 'O Nas', *Grazhdanin Nablyudatel'*, <http://www.nabludatel.org/about/> (accessed 16 May 2014).

⁴⁷ 'Otchyoty nablyudatelei c uchastkov Moskvyy' *Grazhdanin Nablyudatel'*, <http://www.nabludatel.org/otchety-nablyudatelej-vybory-v-gosdumu/> (accessed 17 May 2014).

⁴⁸ See Antonov, *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*.

monitoring elections in Russia, observers had to sign up either through political parties or as media representatives.⁴⁹ Thus, numerous volunteers operated through *Novaya Gazeta*, effectively giving the newspaper volunteer correspondents in a larger number of polling stations than it would normally have had the resources to cover. The findings were published widely, with *Novaya Gazeta* and other opposition-minded publications posting live updates with details of violations on their websites⁵⁰ (and with several shut down for a number of hours on Election Day due to a 'Denial of Service' attack⁵¹). GOLOS set up a crowd-sourcing site to which citizens could send details of violations and received 7801 submissions from across the Federation.⁵² *Grazhdanin Nablyudatel'* encouraged its volunteers to write a report of the day's events, 21 of which were published in *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli* in January, partly as an attempt to recruit more volunteers for the Presidential elections two months later. The Russian blogosphere, already well known for being extremely active and highly politicised, was awash with testimonies and reports from other observers.⁵³ That there were citizen observers monitoring violations and reporting them to independent organisations undoubtedly increased the number of violations recorded and fuelled the calls for new elections. The discourse they produced was rearticulated through popular media outlets, thus helping to throw the legitimacy of the elections into question in the eyes of rapidly growing numbers of citizens and was used by opposition groups to encourage voters to voice their anger through street protests.⁵⁴ In other words, the discourse translated into action.

⁴⁹ M. Bader, 'Crowd-Sourcing Election Monitoring in the 2011-2012 Russian Elections', *East European Politics*, Vol. 29, No. 4, (2013).

⁵⁰ See for instance 'Vybory 4 Dekabrya 2011 Goda. Khronika Narushenii', *Novaya Gazeta*, 4 December 2011, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/politics/49811.html> (accessed 20 May 2014); 'Khronika Golosovaniya', *Lenta.ru*, 5 December 2011, <http://lenta.ru/articles/2011/12/04/chrono/> (accessed 20 May 2014).

⁵¹ 'Saiti izdaniy Slon.ru, "Bol'shoi Gorod", i "The New Times" podverglis DDoS-Atakam, oni nedostupnyye', *Gazeta.ru*, 4 December 2011, http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lenta/2011/12/04/n_2121694.shtml (accessed 20 May 2014).

⁵² See Karta Narushenii Na Vyborakh, <http://www.kartanarusheniy.org/2011-12-04> (accessed 20 May 2014).

⁵³ B. Etling, K. Alexanyan, J. Kelly, R. Faris, J. Palfrey and U. Gasser, 'Public Discourse in the Russian Blogosphere: Mapping RuNet Politics and Mobilization', Berkman Center Research Publication, No. 2010-11, October 2010, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1698344>, (accessed 20 May 2014).

⁵⁴ Bader, 'Crowd-Sourcing Election Monitoring in the 2011-2012 Russian Elections'.

Less than a week later, on 10 December, mass demonstrations were held in 99 cities across Russia⁵⁵ under the banner of 'Za Chestnyye Vybory' (For Honest Elections), with the central Moscow event attracting up to 150 thousand people.⁵⁶ Even the mainstream, state-controlled media, which does not normally report on such events, gave the protests primetime coverage.⁵⁷ More protests followed that winter, fuelling an increase in the idea of public scrutiny of elections. In January, other groups claiming to enact *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* of the electoral process were created by opposition leaders, such as *Liga Izbiratelei* (Voters' League) by Boris Akunin and Leonid Parfyonov⁵⁸ and *RosVybory* (RussElections) by Alexey Navalnyi.⁵⁹ Together with *Grazhdanin Nabyuldatel'*, they encouraged citizens to sign up to monitor the Presidential elections on 4 March.

The Kremlin sought to harness the activism resulting from this citizen-articulated discourse of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* by facilitating the establishment of pro-Putin monitoring groups with names that mimicked the slogans employed by the protest movement, such as 'Za Chistyye Vybory' (For Clean Elections).⁶⁰ It also responded to the accusations of electoral manipulation by investing 15 billion roubles (more than the election itself cost in total⁶¹) in installing two web cameras in each of Russia's 95,000 polling stations before the presidential election, one directed towards the places where voters cast their ballots and the other towards the place where the vote-counting should take place after voting had closed.⁶² The recordings were then to be live-streamed to YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and to a

⁵⁵ 'Do Samykh do Okrain: Mitingi protesta 10 Dekabrya proshli v 99 Gorodakh Rossii', *Lenta.ru*, 11 December 2011, <http://lenta.ru/articles/2011/12/10/worldprotest/> (accessed 17 May 2014).

⁵⁶ 'Miting na Bolotnoi sobral ot 85 do 150 tysyach chelovek', *Grani.ru*, 10 December 2011, <http://grani.ru/Politics/Russia/activism/m.193917.html> (accessed 17 May 2014).

⁵⁷ T. Samsonova, "Pervyi Kanal" i NTV rasskazali o mitingakh oppozitsi', *Slon.ru*, 10 December 2011, http://slon.ru/russia/chto_rasskazali_o_mitingakh_po_televizoru-723936.xhtml (accessed 20 January 2014).

⁵⁸ 'Akunin i Parfyonov voshli v sostav uchrezhditelei Ligi Izbiratelei', *RIA Novosti*, 16 January 2012, <http://ria.ru/politics/20120116/540699336.html> (accessed 17 May 2014).

⁵⁹ 'Navalny predstavit proyekt dlya nabliudatelei "RosVybory"', *BBC Russkaya Sluzhba*, 24 January 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/russia/2012/01/120124_navalny_rosvybory_observers.shtml (accessed 17 May 2014).

⁶⁰ D. Khachatryan, 'Nabliudeniye za Nabliudatelyami', *Novaya Gazeta*, 2 March 2012, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/politics/51366.html> (accessed 18 May 2012).

⁶¹ 'Ideya Putina o "vyborakh onlain" ozadachila i pravitel'stvo i SMI: Internet v Rossii mozhet' prosto rukhnut', *News.ru*, 20 December 2011, <http://www.newsru.com/russia/20dec2011/pollsonline.html> (accessed 21 May 2014).

⁶² A. Trofimov, 'Prezidentskie vybory-2012 v 10 tsifrakh', *Forbes*, 2 March 2012, <http://www.forbes.ru/sobytiya-photogallery/vlast/79651-prezidentskie-vybory-2012-v-tsifrah/photo/1> (accessed 18 May 2014).

pecially created website, webvybory2012.ru.⁶³ According to Putin, the cameras would record all traces of foul play⁶⁴, although critics claimed that the technology was not advanced enough to capture the high-quality images required to prove that violations had occurred.⁶⁵ The introduction of these measures was undoubtedly an attempt to mobilise against the perceived resonance of civic conceptions of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*.

The campaigns to recruit citizen observers were highly successful: according Forbes Russia, nearly 690,000 people were registered as observers for one of the five candidates standing in the elections. Among this figure, 57,500 people were working with the non-systemic opposition, such as liberal party Yabloko and the opposition-minded monitory projects⁶⁶, and 95,000 with the pro-Putin organisations.⁶⁷ The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) recruited 304,000 citizen observers, the largest number of all parties.⁶⁸ International observers numbered approximately 600.⁶⁹ However, while GOLOS recorded 6491 violations during the Presidential elections,⁷⁰ Za Chistyie Vybory recorded only 1,821,⁷¹ figures that belie the political agendas of both groups.

The high level of interest in election monitoring and the protests that followed caused numerous commentators and social scientists to call this period an 'awakening' of Russian civil society.⁷² The regime was forced to make certain concessions to the opposition, liberalising the registration of new political parties

⁶³ 'Vybory-2012', *RIA Novosti*.

⁶⁴ R. Dorokhov, 'Videonabliudeniye za vyborami oslozhnit slozhnit rabotu runeta', *Vedomosti*, 20 December 2011, http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/news/1457576/bolshoj_brat_sliskom_velik (accessed 20 May 2014).

⁶⁵ 'Ideya Putina o "vyborakh onlain" ozadachila i pravitel'stvo i SMI', *News.ru*.

⁶⁶ Trofimov, 'Prezidentskiye vybory-2012 v 10 tsifrakh'.

⁶⁷ 'Assotsiatsiya yuristov RF podgotovit 95 tysyach nabliudatelei na vybory', *RIA Novosti*, 22 February 2012, http://ria.ru/vybor2012_hod_vyborov/20120222/572096419.html (accessed 18 May 2014).

⁶⁸ 'Vybory-2012', *RIA Novosti*.

⁶⁹ Trofimov, 'Prezidentskiye vybory-2012 v 10 tsifrakh'.

⁷⁰ I. Petrov, 'Prokurory nashli 3 tysyachi narushenii na vyborakh, no ikh rezul'taty ne sporyat', *RBC Daily*, 2 May 2012, <http://www.rbcdaily.ru/politics/562949983718914> (accessed 16 May 2014).

⁷¹ 'V korpus nablyudatelei "Za Chistyie Vybory" postupilo pochni 2 tys. obrashenii', *Rosbalt*, 5 March 2012, <http://www.rosbalt.ru/moscow/2012/03/05/953575.html> (accessed 18 May 2014).

⁷² See, for instance, 'A Russian Awakening', *The Economist: Eastern Approaches Blog*, 11 December 2011, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2011/12/protest-russia-0> (accessed 17 May 2014); B. Whitmore, 'Did Russian Civil Society Wake Up in 2011?', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 29 December 2011, http://www.rferl.org/content/the_year_russian_civil_society_woke_up/24437163.html (accessed 16 May 2014); A. Sysoyev, 'Put' Nablyudatelya', *Russkiy Zhurnal*, <http://russ.ru/Mirovaya-povestka/Put-nablyudatelya> (accessed 16 May 2014); D. Trenin, 'Responding to the Russian Awakening', *Carnegie Moscow Centre*, 31 March 2013, <http://carnegie.ru/2013/03/31/responding-to-russian-awakening/fzyu> (accessed 16 May 2014).

and reintroducing the direct, though limited, election of regional governors.⁷³ However, draconian measures were also introduced in order to deter further street demonstrations. Among these were huge fines for unsanctioned rallies,⁷⁴ the creation of a blacklist of internet sites allowing any kind of 'dangerous' site to be blocked by court order,⁷⁵ and the so-called 'foreign agents law' requiring all NGOs receiving funding from abroad to declare themselves as such on their print and online materials.⁷⁶ Twenty-seven people were charged with rioting and violence against police during one of the demonstrations in the lead up to the Presidential elections, in a case that is widely seen as a show trial intended to deter others from protesting.⁷⁷ To return to the question posed above – how was the discourse received? – I have shown here that its impact was substantial, partly responsible for mass demonstrations and policy change by the authoritarian regime. I now turn to a closer examination of the construction of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* in the text *Razgevannyye Nablyudateli* in order to show how citizen conceptualisations differ from those of the Kremlin.

The book is made up of 21 first-hand accounts of election monitoring by *Grazhdanin Nablyudatel'* volunteers. The accounts contain descriptions, in varying levels of detail, of the authors' reasons for joining the movement, the training they undertook, the process of monitoring on Election Day, their attempts to hinder violations, their attempts to alert polling station staff and police to crimes taking place, and their emotional reactions to their work. This book is thus an excellent primary resource for analysing how *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* fits into activists' broader conceptualisation of civic engagement: as discussed above, *Grazhdanin Nablyudatel'* was the first independent citizens' election monitoring organisation, and

⁷³ Gel'man, 'Cracks in the Wall'.

⁷⁴ Ye. Vinokurova, 'Shtrafy povysyat so snizheniem', *Gazeta.ru*, 22 May 2012, http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2012/05/22_a_4597217.shtml (accessed 29 May 2014).

⁷⁵ A. Golitsyna, 'Gosduma odobrila fil'tratsiyu runeta', *Vedomosti*, 9 July 2012, http://www.vedomosti.ru/tech/news/2260500/proshel_bez_filtra (accessed 29 May 2014).

⁷⁶ 'Zakon ob inostrannykh agentakh vstupit v silu v Rossii', *BBC Russkaya Sluzhba*, 20 November 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/russia/2012/11/121120_ngo_agents_law.shtml (accessed 29 May 2014).

⁷⁷ K. Rogov, 'Kogo utopit Bolotnoye delo', *Novaya Gazeta*, 23 June 2012, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/politics/53208.html> (accessed 29 May 2014); V. Kozlov, 'Eto pokazatel'nyi protsess, poyetomu vsekh zakroyut', *Gazeta.ru*, 4 July 2012, http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2012/07/04_a_4664381.shtml (accessed 29 May 2014); Ye. Selivanova, 'Ot 6 do 5 let dlya "uznikov Bolotnoi"', *The New Times*, 21 January 2014, <http://www.newtimes.ru/articles/detail/77603/> (accessed 29 May 2014); 'Rossiya: Bolotnoye Delo – Pokazatel'nyi politicheskii protsess', Amnesty International, <http://amnesty.org.ru/node/2718> (accessed 29 May 2014).

was advocated by opposition figures, human rights activists and NGO leaders.⁷⁸ It can therefore be taken as a paradigmatic example of the discourse of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* 'from below'.

The concept of *kontrol'* is central to the authors' descriptions of their role as citizen observers. It appears 34 times throughout the book, either as an abstract noun (*kontrol'*), a concrete noun (*kontrolyor*), a verb (*kontrolirovat'*, *prokontrolirovat'*, *kontrolirovali*) or as an adjective (*kontrol'nyye*). From the start, *kontrol'* is presented as key to understanding the nature of an election observer's work. In the first sentence of the book, the editor states:

The book you are holding in your hands is a series of stories about the elections to the State Duma in 2011, written by observers – by people who have decided to take part personally in civic (*grazhdanskom*) *kontrol'* of the elections.⁷⁹

The hyphenated sub clause indicates that the author is defining who observers are: dedicated citizens who enact *kontrol'*. It also suggests that the stories to follow should be read as examples of this activity.

While concepts *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* and *obshchestvennyi kontrolyor* appear only five times, there are two reasons why the word *obshchestvennyi* does not appear more frequently. First, it only makes grammatical sense to use it when referring to the abstract or concrete nouns (the adverb-plus-verb *obshchestvenno kontrolirovat'* sounds awkward in Russian, just as 'to scrutinise publically' does in English). Second, in many instances it is clear that the authors take the public (and therefore independent) nature of their work as a given and consider a qualifying adjective unnecessary in many instances. Since all of the authors present themselves as concerned volunteers situated outside of state structures, it is thus fair to state that the adjective *obshchestvennyi* is assumed in virtually all cases.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ 'Kak Stat' Nablyudatelem', Navalnyi: LiveJournal, 8 November 2011, <http://navalny.livejournal.com/641950.html> (accessed 16 May 2014).

⁷⁹ Antonov, 'From the Editors', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 7.

⁸⁰ One exception here is '*kontrol'nyye sootnosheniya*', a task performed by members of electoral commission do at the end of the election that involves counting the ballots in the ballot box and checking if this number corresponds to the number of people on the electoral register. '*Kontrol'nyye*' appears six times in this context.

What do the volunteer observers understand by *obshchestvennyi kontrol*? The book's editors define it as a process 'of finding tricky but legal and effective ways of protecting the law.'⁸¹ The centrality of legal accountability to understanding *obshchestvennyi kontrol* is echoed across many other accounts. One observer writes, 'Our moral position is "Everything has to be in accordance with the law!" And to let violations pass without writing complaints was strategically impossible!'⁸² Another states, 'We said that we intended to conduct these elections honestly, and that we would do all that we could to observe the law, and proved this through our actions.'⁸³ Authors describe how they monitored the processes of dropping ballots into the ballot box (to make sure that one, rather than multiple ballots were dropped),⁸⁴ conducted name checking on additional voter lists (to ensure that only those registered were voting),⁸⁵ counted the ballots (to check that votes were attributed to the correct parties),⁸⁶ and filled in the records (*protokoly*) of the results (to confirm that the records corresponded to the number of ballots in each party's pile).⁸⁷ Observers thus use the state's pre-existing legislature to highlight the illegality of the authorities' (or their paid assistants') actions, meaning that monitoring and checking becomes a highly contentious, rather than consensual, activity.⁸⁸ So although processes of checking and verifying are central means for making sure the law is upheld (and to this extent recall both the Leninist and post-Stalinist meanings discussed in the previous chapter), monitoring here take on an antagonistic quality.

Indeed, *obshchestvennyi kontrol* is presented as an activity that directly conflicts with the authorities, with state employees considered to be underhand and

⁸¹Antonov, *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 9.

⁸² P. Vasil'ev 'How I Monitored "Honest" Elections for the First Time', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 14.

⁸³ M. Stupakova, 'How our whole family worked as observers', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 70.

⁸⁴ T. Chernikova, 'The Captured and Released "Ballot-Stuffer"', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 95.

⁸⁵ I. Berliand, 'Successful Polling Station', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 251.

⁸⁶ A. Denisova, 'I am watching you, or how I observed the elections', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 244; Vadim Koslovich, Mikhail Bolotnikov, 'Election Report: Polling Station No 1493', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 158.

⁸⁷ N. Pis'mennyi, 'Elections or Telephone Justice?', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 31.

⁸⁸ Such behaviour has been variously conceptualised as 'rightful resistance' and 'consentful contention'. See K. O'Brien and L. Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); J. Straughn, "'Taking the State at Its Word": The Arts of Consentful Contention in the German Democratic Republic", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 110, No. 6 (2005).

deceitful and the job of the observer to ensure they operate fairly. This exhortation from one observer to her readers is worth citing in full:

And first and foremost we have to fight these crooks and thieves. We have to *kontrolirovat'* them, unmask them, force them to admit the truth. Go and be an observer, it's not that difficult. You don't have to sit at the polling station all day; come for the end, come for a while, but do come. The more *kontrol'*, the less chance of cheating.⁸⁹

Kontrolirovat' is thus presented as synonymous with 'fighting', 'unmasking' and 'forcing' the authorities. This is a complete reversal of the meaning advanced by the Kremlin, which bases its conception on assistance to the authorities. This antagonistic relationship to the authorities is also borne out in their representations of the relationship between citizen observers and electoral commission staff. One observer laments:

Psychological pressure is a provocation: you want to rebel against it, challenge it, defend your lawful position. But if you lose your temper, you risk hearing the fatal words, "he is obstructing us, remove him". But if you don't assert yourself, how are you supposed to observe? Hide in a corner and not be conspicuous?⁹⁰

Another observer also warns potential observers: 'You have to be psychologically prepared for the fact that members of the commission will see the observer as an enemy and will put pressure on him throughout the day.'⁹¹ This indicates that animosity is evident on both sides, with the authorities at least as mistrustful of the observers as the observers are of the authorities. This is, of course, a huge divergence from the harmonious relationship between citizens and the state as envisaged in the Kremlin's discourse.

⁸⁹ A. Kovrova, E. Pakhomova and D. Petryagina, 'The Commission got Drunk at the Polling Station and Voted for United Russia', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 111.

⁹⁰ V. Kamskii, 'Elections as an Exciting Adventure', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 85.

⁹¹ P. Vasil'yev 'How I Monitored "Honest" Elections for the First Time', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 15.

There are also a number of synonyms used for observers and their work; however, certain words are reserved for the authors' own critical, independent work, while others are used to describe the activities of people sympathetic to the regime. For instance, while *nablyudatel'* and *obshchestvennyi kontrolyor* are used interchangeably as synonyms when referring to observers perceived to be truly independent, observers from United Russia or other groups seen as loyal to the regime are not called *obshchestvennyye kontrolyory*.⁹² The implication is that such people are not working in the interests of *obshchestvo* (society). Similarly, there appears to be a qualified difference between the verbs *nablyudat'* and *kontrolirovat'*: the former is considered as passive and potentially partisan, while the latter is active and independent. One author writes, 'With such active *kontrol'* of voting and the procedure of conducting the results, here is the difference between *Grazhdanin Nablyudatel* and observers organised by the parties taking part in the elections.'⁹³ This indicates that *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* can only be properly performed by observers who do not have any connection to the regime and, ideally, are opposed to it.

While the independent and oppositional nature of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* is also translated into the observers' self-understandings as upholders of the law, they are also keen to present themselves as normal, unexceptional citizens. At the beginning of each testimony is a brief self-description of the author, with personal details such as age, education, occupation and family situations, thus giving the impression that the typical observer is an average Russian citizen. The likely reason for this is to convince other 'average' readers that they too could become observers. Throughout the text, numerous exhortations are made for the reader to join the movement: 'Soon there will be new elections and the project needs observers. Look in the mirror: who, if not you?'⁹⁴ However, what is required of an *obshchestvennyi kontrolyor* is not merely to be average, they also have to be 'like-minded'⁹⁵, to be 'concerned'⁹⁶ about justice, and to be able to provide support to fellow observers.⁹⁷

⁹² See A. Gorinov, 'Commentary from a Lawyer', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 258, pp. 264; K. Fedyaev, 'Someone Has Walked Down the Hill', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 147.

⁹³ A. Gorinov, 'Commentary from a Lawyer', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 256.

⁹⁴ N. Pis'mennyi, 'Elections or Telephone Justice?', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 31.

⁹⁵ 'From the Editors', pp. 9; N. Pis'mennyi, 'Elections or Telephone Justice?', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 25.

⁹⁶ M. Stupakova, 'How our whole family worked as observers', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 75.

⁹⁷ P. Vasil'yev 'How I Monitored "Honest" Elections for the First Time', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 15.

An observer must also be sufficiently trained and able to remain resilient in the face of pressure from the authorities,⁹⁸ as well as happy to work for free and to undertake sufficient training.⁹⁹ In sum, while the authors of these texts present themselves as ordinary, concerned citizens on one hand, on the other, they see themselves as tough, morally righteous and self-sacrificing. There is also a clear sense of an 'us versus them' mentality, both in terms of their relationship to the authorities and to observers loyal to the regime.

To conclude this section, I return to the three questions mentioned at the beginning. First, I have shown that citizen observers consider themselves to be a 'certain kind' of normal citizen; that is people who, on the face of it, are just like anyone else, but who also possess a social conscience and a strong sense of civic virtue and are prepared to put themselves into physically and psychologically challenging situations for the sake of a higher moral good. Importantly, they are sympathetic to the opposition movement. This contrasts with the kind of people who have come to fill the PMCs, discussed in the previous section, who are former state officials and do not have oppositional politics. Like the rest of the protest movement more generally, citizen inspectors tended to be relatively young, well-educated, urban individuals,¹⁰⁰ with several authors keeping online blogs. In writing the texts, authors hoped to attract more observers for the Presidential elections; writing election reports was a discursive form of activism that sought to swell the ranks of the citizen observer movement.

To address the second question – what meanings of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* are contained within the text itself – I have shown that the authors of *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli* advance a conception of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* that associates it with a form of legal activism that directly confronts the authorities and attempts to hold them accountable to electoral law. It is fundamentally a contentious activity. While it is similar to the conception advanced by the Kremlin, discussed in the following section, insofar as it requires a process of checking and verifying, the citizen observers link *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* directly to the law. It thus recalls a set of practices that others have termed 'rightful resistance'¹⁰¹ or 'consentful

⁹⁸ P. Vasil'yev 'How I Monitored "Honest" Elections for the First Time', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 20.

⁹⁹ N. Pis'mennyi, 'Elections or Telephone Justice?', *Razgnevannyye Nablyudateli*, pp. 25

¹⁰⁰ "'Levada Tsentr' sostavil portret uchastnikov mitinga na Prospekt Sakharova', *Lenta.ru*, 27 December 2011, <http://lenta.ru/news/2011/12/26/sakharovppl/> (accessed 22 May 2014).

¹⁰¹ O'Brien and Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China*.

contention',¹⁰² in which citizens use official means to demand goods or rights sanctioned by law but not enforced by local authorities or to contest state decisions that contradict its existing legal code. Thus, *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* is seen as radical and oppositional with the power to effect social change, rather than a consensual activity with subordinate citizens uniting to follow a state-defined trajectory of social development.

In terms of reception, it is clear that this book alone is not likely to have had much impact either on the opposition movement or on the struggle for meaning of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*. However, the impact of the citizens' movement to monitor elections, of which this book is a part, had significant effects on state policy. I discerned two strands: on the one hand, a liberalising strand loosened restrictions on political parties and re-introduced regional gubernatorial elections (as discussed above); on the other hand, an authoritarian strand increased fines for participating in unsanctioned rallies, sought to curb internet freedom and restricted the activities of certain NGOs. I also argue that a further effect was the state's attempt to colonise meanings of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* through the development of the draft law 'On the Foundations of *Obshchestvennyi Kontrol'* in the Russian Federation.' It is to a discussion of this law that I now turn.

'On the Foundations of *Obshchestvennyi Kontrol'* in the Russian Federation'

In this final section, I show how the meaning of the concept *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* has been fixed by the Russian state through its attachment in law to a specific set of social practices. This is exemplified in the new law 'On the Framework for *Obshchestvennyi Kontrol'* in the Russian Federation', signed into the legal codex by Putin on 21st July 2014, which defines the basis on which citizens may interact with authorities and stipulates that such interaction can only be conducted through state-sanctioned bodies.¹⁰³ This interaction may take five possible forms, all of which are linked to the network of PCBs. The unique legislation, the only one of its kind in the world, evoked strong views in its favour and in opposition during the process of its development, with representatives of both the authorities and the

¹⁰² Straughn, "Taking the state at its word".

¹⁰³ 'Putin podpisal zakon ob obshchestvennom kontrole v RF', *RIA Novosti*, 22 July 2014, <http://ria.ru/politics/20140722/1017012976.html> (accessed 12 August 2014).

NGO community sitting on either side of the fence.¹⁰⁴ Thus, an analysis of these views goes to the heart of the conflict around what civic participation in governance should look like in contemporary Russia. However, the fixing of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* in law represents the blanket co-optation of the 'bottom-up' discourses discussed above. In what follows here, I begin with a summary of the law, before tracing its development and summarising reactions to it. I conclude with a discussion of how this version of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* contrasts with that advanced by the citizen election observers.

The law defines *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* as the activities conducted by the existing PCB network, which are described as the monitoring (*nablyudenie*) of state officials as well as review (*proverki*), analysis (*analiza*) and evaluation (*otsenka*) of decisions taken and legislation drafted by them.¹⁰⁵ This definition is strikingly similar to the activities of the late Soviet-era public inspectors who enacted *narodnyi kontrol'* by 'check[ing] the factual fulfilment of the directives of party and government in the areas of the economy, of economic and cultural construction.'¹⁰⁶ It recalls the consensual relationship between society and the state advanced in Soviet times, where the former was presented as an assistant to the latter. One difference in the present definition, however, is that the Soviet activities state the benchmark against which state activities should be measured: the party and government directives. The contemporary formulation does not state principles or criteria against which government decisions should be measured.¹⁰⁷

According to the new law, *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* serves three main purposes: to ensure that the rights of citizens and public organisations are protected; to provide feedback from citizens to the authorities; and to provide a public evaluation of the work of the authorities. The suggestion is that such activities are not already occurring, for instance through courts, elections and the media; the law thus represents an attempt to develop new institutions that fulfil the functions

¹⁰⁴ 'Chtoby ne korrumpirovalas' bor'ba s korruptsiyei', Press Sluzhba Obshchestvennoi Palaty RF, 28 March 2012, <http://oprf.ru/press/news/2012/newsitem/17174> (accessed 27 May 2014).

¹⁰⁵ 'Federal'nyi zakon Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 21 Iyulya 2014g. N 212-F3 "Ob osnovakh obshchestvennogo kontrolya v Rossiiskoi Federatsii", *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 23 July 2014, <http://www.rg.ru/2014/07/23/zakon-dok.html> (accessed 12 August 2014).

¹⁰⁶ Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union*, pp. 108.

¹⁰⁷ An earlier draft of the law contained a vague description of the 'public interest'; however, this has been removed in the final version. See 'Proekt Federal'nogo Zakona "Ob obshchestvennom kontrole v Rossiiskoi Federatsii", Press Sluzhba Obshchestvennoi Palaty RF, <http://www.oprf.ru/ru/discussions/1389/newsitem/18428?PHPSESSID=2g7g9jcpjif8j89kpgj23b6v7> (accessed 13 August 2014).

performed by those in democracies, and thus recalls Putin's exhortation to develop a Russian form of democracy, discussed in the previous chapter.

A further stated aim is to 'regulate' the existing legislation on *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, which up to now has appeared haphazardly in various laws (discussed in Chapter One), and bring it together under a single legal framework. Alluding to the development of Putin's 'power vertical' (*vertikal' vlasti*), commentary on the bill by the Presidential Human Rights Council, one of the bodies that developed the bill, states,

This in no way to be interpreted as an attempt to create a 'social vertical'; on the contrary, it is about creating the legal framework for the functioning of the 'social horizontal', which can ensure *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* at each level and each part of the state machine.¹⁰⁸

Indeed, the attempt to create a single framework for this activity recalls the governance practices of the Soviet Union, in which the widespread practices of *narodnyi kontrol'* were co-ordinated through centrally controlled monitoring bodies (and frequently resulted in the co-optation of the so-called people's inspectors into the corrupt system they were supposed to be monitoring). The implication is that the contemporary law is an attempt to re-introduce these Soviet-era practices in post-Soviet Russia; indeed, the Soviet-era law on *narodnyi kontrol'* was made available on Presidential Human Rights Council website along with other documents considered relevant to the new draft law.¹⁰⁹

While the law states that *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* may take any form that does not contradict the principles set out in the document, it nonetheless delineates five examples of what such activities should consist of, what their outputs should be and how government departments should respond. First, a public examination

¹⁰⁸ 'Kontseptsia Proiekta Federal'nogo Zakona "Ob Obshchestvennom (Grazhdanskom) Kontrole v Rossiiskoi Federatsii"', Sovet Pri Prezidente po Razvitiyu Grazhdanskogo Obshchestva i Pravam Cheloveka, http://www.president-sovet.ru/chairman/materials/draft_federal_law/the_concept_of_the_draft_federal_law.php (accessed 17 September 2013).

¹⁰⁹ See 'Proyekt Federal'nogo Zakona "Ob Obshchestvennom (Grazhdanskom) Kontrole v Rossiiskoi Federatsii"', Sovet Pri Prezidente po Razvitiyu Grazhdanskogo Obshchestva i Pravam Cheloveka, http://www.president-sovet.ru/chairman/materials/draft_federal_law/ (accessed 13 August 2014).

(*obshchestvennaya ekspertiza*) requires ‘public experts’, that is local academics, researchers or NGO leaders, to study draft laws and existing legislation and assess their social impact and whether they comply with the ‘public interest’. Second, public discussions (*obshchestvennyye obshuzhdeniya*) consist of public meetings between public monitoring bodies and local government, which aim ‘to include the widest range of views of different social groups’ in the development of legislation. Third, public hearings (*obshchestvennyye slushaniya*) are similar to public discussions, but allow any concerned citizen to take part. Fourth, public monitoring (*obshchestvennyi monitoring*) is an on-going form of surveillance of local government activities. Fifth, public inspections (*obshchestvennyye proverki*) are auditing processes of government bodies or officials perceived to be failing in the work, which involve public monitoring bodies collecting information and developing proposals to remedy the situation. Each of these five should produce an output, such as a final report or statement of findings, details of which should be placed online. The organisation or individual under scrutiny is required to respond to the output and, if in agreement with the recommendations, make the necessary changes. If it is not in agreement, a public hearing or debate should be organised on the subject.

Importantly, in order to enact *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, interested parties must join the existing PCB network. Individual citizens and NGOs cannot take part independently. While the law states that the organisations conducting *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* should be based on a relationship of independence (*nezavisimost'*) from state bodies, it is difficult to understand how this can occur in practice when, for instance, a third of Public Chambers' membership are chosen by the head of the regional or national executive. Since the authorities have a hand in the make-up and activities of PCBs, the question arises as to whether independent monitoring can be performed at all.

In sum, the new law delimits the possible forms in which all civic engagement in governance should take and links them to the PCB network, thereby making practices of *kontrol'* controllable by the state. Its definition of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* strongly echoes the concept of *narodnyi kontrol'* advanced in the Soviet period, in which citizens conducted processes of accounting to ensure that state policy was fulfilled. Both conceptions conceive of the relationship between the citizens and the authorities as a consensual one, in which the former assists the

latter in the execution of centrally-determined tasks. However, the contemporary formulation is more ambiguous, since it does not contain guidelines regarding what the bodies should be looking for. It expands the network of authoritarian neoliberal governance, in which a limited amount of pluralism is ceded to civic groups in order to harness civic activism. I now turn to a discussion of the development of the law.

The idea for the law has its roots in the growing trend to include citizens in governance processes, stipulated in the administrative reforms discussed in Chapter One; however, it was a regional legislature which began the concrete development of the legal framework. In February 2010, the Public Council under the Samara regional Duma requested the organisation Lawyers for Civil Society (*Yuristy za Grazhdanskoe Obshchestva*) to assist in the development of proposals to enhance public participation in the examination and monitoring of legislation.¹¹⁰ Regional lawmakers felt that existing legislation did not always correspond to societal interests and that involving citizens in the legislative process would ensure that their needs were catered for in the final document.¹¹¹ Thus, the initial desire to see a codification of civic participation in governance was visible on the part of both the authorities and the NGO sector.

Later that year, one of the members of Lawyers for Civil Society, Dar'ya Miloslavskaya, was asked to join a working group on the expansion of civil society as part of the Strategy-2020 project, a government initiative that aimed to formulate the country's social and economy development strategy for the coming decade. The working group was headed by Human Rights Council chairman, Mikhail Fedotov and the director of the Agency of Social Information, Elena Topoleva, and was given the task of developing legislation that would encourage a 'drastic increase' (*kardinal'noye uvelicheniye*) in the activities of the NGO sector.¹¹² Using the proposals developed in Samara as a starting point, the group began the process of drawing up other forms of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*. They noted that the concept

¹¹⁰ D. Miloslavskaya, "Noveishaya Istoriya" sozdaniya proyekta Zakona "Ob Obshchestvennom Kontrole", 'Obshchestvennyi Kontrol': Nepoliticheskaya Uchastiye Grazhdan v Publichnoye Politike', Informatsionno-Analiticheskii Biulleten', Fond "Obshchestvennyi Verdikt", 2012, No. 1; Novosti, No. 57, Yuristy Za Grazhdanskoye Obshchestvo, 19 February 2010, http://www.lawcs.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=374:12-2010-&catid=24:-2010-&Itemid=90 (accessed 26 May 2014).

¹¹¹ D. Miloslavskaya, "Noveishaya Istoriya" sozdaniya proyekta Zakona "Ob Obshchestvennom Kontrole", 'Obshchestvennyi Kontrol': Nepoliticheskaya Uchastiye Grazhdan v Publichnoye Politike', Informatsionno-Analiticheskii Biulleten', Fond "Obshchestvennyi Verdikt", 2012, No. 1.

¹¹² 'Ob ekspertnoi gruppe', Gruppy 16: Razvitiye Obshchestvennykh Institutov, Strategiya Sotisa'l'no-ekonomicheskogo Razvitiya Strany do 2020 Goda, http://2020strategy.ru/g16/about_gr (accessed 26 May 2014).

appears in numerous other laws (some of which have been discussed in Chapter 1) as a means for encouraging civic participation in various spheres of state activity, and decided to create a piece of legislation that would extend it across the government apparatus.¹¹³ In 2011, the project was passed to the Federal Public Chamber to handle, and a special working group was created in the Presidential Human Rights Council, which would also add their expertise.¹¹⁴

Meanwhile, other legislation was advancing slowly in that direction: in February 2011, Putin signed a decree instituting ‘public discussion’ (*obshchestvennyi obsuzhdeniye*) of draft federal laws, which allowed citizens to post comments on proposals posted on the internet.¹¹⁵ In November of that year, a session on combating corruption was held in the Public Chamber, during which was presented a draft report on anti-corruption mechanisms. Among other things, the report recommended the extension of mechanisms of *obshchestvennyi kontrol’* as widely as possible and delineated the various forms it could take.¹¹⁶ The meeting also discussed the draft law on *obshchestvennyi kontrol’*. At this time, the proposals guaranteed the right for citizens to engage in ‘direct action’ in order to identify state bodies or individuals who break the law. To do this, citizens could join NGOs, public organisations or PCBs.¹¹⁷ The initial idea was thus that every citizen could sign up to become a public inspector and that performing *obshchestvennyi kontrol’* would not be restricted to PCBs.

Over the next few years, the concept of *obshchestvennyi kontrol’* became increasingly common in Kremlin discourse, and was presented as a means for citizens to engage in the monitoring of various areas of public life: for instance, the

¹¹³ D. Miloslavskaya, “‘Noveishaya Istoriya’ sozdaniya proyekta Zakona “Ob Obshchestvennom Kontrole”, ‘Obshchestvennyi Kontrol’: Nepoliticheskaya Uchastiye Grazhdan v Publichnoye Politike’, Informatsionno-Analiticheskii Biulleten’, Fond “Obshchestvennyi Verdikt”, 2012, No. 1.

¹¹⁴ ‘Postayannaya komissiya po zakonodatel’stvu ob obshchestvennom kontrole’, Sovet Pri Prezidente RF, http://president-sovet.ru/structure/group_14/ (accessed 27 May 2014).

¹¹⁵ ‘Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 9 Fevralya 2011 g. N 167’, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 11 February 2011, <http://www.rg.ru/2011/02/11/obsuzhdenie-dok.html> (accessed 27 May 2014).

¹¹⁶ Doklad ob effektivnosti provodimykh v Rossiiskoi Federatsii antikorrupcionnykh meropriyatii i uchastii institutov grazhdanskogo obshchestva v realizatsii antikorrupcionnoi politiki’ Obshchestvennaya Palata RF, Moscow 2011, <http://opr.ru/files/dokument2011/dokladantikorrupciya.pdf> (accessed 27 May 2014).

¹¹⁷ ‘Korrupsiya pod pritsemom’, Press Sluzhba Obshchestvennoi Palaty RF, 3 November 2011, <http://opr.ru/1449/1471/newsitem/15857> (accessed 27 May 2014).

armed forces,¹¹⁸ state purchases over a billion dollars,¹¹⁹ orphanages,¹²⁰ the building of roads,¹²¹ Unified State Exam required for entry into university,¹²² and all public officials.¹²³ Vladimir Putin championed the concept in his own speeches and articles to the nation. As discussed in the previous chapter, in his February 2012 pre-election article entitled 'Democracy and the Quality of the State, Putin made it clear that the extension of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* would be a key feature of developing civic participation in governance in his coming term. 'Above all,' he stated,

It is an all-citizens' (*obshchegrazhdanskoye*) discussion of the draft laws, decisions and programmes adopted at all levels of government, as well as the evaluation of existing laws and their application.¹²⁴

Later that year, in his 2012 speech to the Federal Assembly, he linked it to the development of democracy, the provision of social services and the reduction of corruption.¹²⁵ Similarly, in his Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly 2013, Putin reiterated his desire to see more discussion and collaboration between the authorities and citizens:

Modern Russia needs a broad public debate, moreover, with practical results, when public initiatives are part of public policy and society monitors (*kontroliruyet*) their execution.¹²⁶

¹¹⁸ 'Obshchestvennyi kontrol' dolzhen priiti v armiyu', Press Sluzhba Obshchestvennoi Palaty RF, 15 February 2012, <http://opr.ru/press/832/newsitem/16747> (accessed 27 May 2014).

¹¹⁹ 'Putin planiruyet vvesti obshchestvennyi kontrol' za goszakupkami', *Golos Rossii*, 11 April 2012, http://rus.ru/2012_04_11/71370057/ (accessed 11 April 2013).

¹²⁰ 'Priyutskii Kontrol', Press Sluzhba Obshchestvennoi Palaty RF, 28 February 2012, <http://opr.ru/press/news/2012/newsitem/16851> (accessed 27 May 2014).

¹²¹ 'Vladimir Putin vystupayet za obshchestvennyi kontrol' nad dorozhnym stroitel'stvom', *First News*, 8 November 2011, <http://www.firstnews.ru/news/vladimir-putin-vystupaet-za-obshchestvennyy-kontrol-naddorozhnym-stroitel'stvom/> (accessed 11 April 2013).

¹²² 'Putin prizivayet usilit' obshchestvennyi kontrol' za provedeniyem YeGE', *Vesti*, 31 May 2011, <http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=460924> (accessed 11 April 2013).

¹²³ 'Rech' Prezidenta Vladimira Putina na zasedanii gosudarstvennoi dумы', *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 9 May 2012, <http://www.rg.ru/2012/05/08/rech.html> (accessed 11 April 2013).

¹²⁴ V. Putin, 'Demokratiya i kachestvo gosudarstva', *Kommersant*, 6 February 2012, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1866753> (accessed 27 May 2014).

¹²⁵ 'Address to the Federal Assembly', *President of Russia*, 12 December 2012, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/4739> (accessed 11 April 2013).

¹²⁶ V. Putin, 'Poslaniye Prezidenta Federal'nomu Sobraniyu', *Prezident Rossii*, 12 December 2013, <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/19825> (accessed 27 May 2014).

He went on to ask the Public Chamber and Presidential Council to work hard on the preparation of the law.

In January 2014, the proposals were sent to the Presidential Administration for further development. Here, the proposals underwent numerous alterations. Most importantly, it changed the provisions on who could conduct public scrutiny: instead of every citizen being able to sign up as a public inspector, public scrutiny must now be enacted through the existing PCB network of public councils, public chambers and public monitoring commissions. It also deleted the clause that stipulated the creation of a single unified portal through which the results of scrutiny exercises would be published, citing a lack of funding and stating that it would be more efficient to use the Federal Public Chamber website.¹²⁷ On 12 March 2014, Putin introduced the revised law into the Duma.¹²⁸ On 25 March 2014, during a Duma debate, it was noted that the passing of the law would require more than 25 changes to existing legislation.¹²⁹ However, the Federation Council indicated their support of the project and their desire to see the bill passed quickly.¹³⁰ In May 2014, the bill received prime airtime on Russian state-controlled TV channel.¹³¹ On 2nd July, it was passed by the Duma and sent to the Federation Council, who passed it on 9th.¹³² Putin then signed it into law on 21st and it became active on 2nd August.¹³³

The proposals were hotly debated by the academic and NGO communities and had initially received a significant level of support from civic groups and human rights activists (before they were amended by the Presidential Administration). Two contrasting positions emerged: one camp supported the idea, believing that codification would give a legal basis for the greater development of scrutiny

¹²⁷ S. Samokhina, 'Obshchestvennyi kontrol' mozhet stat' meneye obshchestvennym', *Kommersant*, 7 February 2014, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2401147> (accessed 27 May 2014).

¹²⁸ 'Putin vnes v Gosdumu zakonoprojekt ob obshchestvennom kontrole v RF', *RIA Novosti*, 12 March 2014, <http://ria.ru/society/20140312/999219608.html> (accessed 26 May 2014).

¹²⁹ 'Osnova Osnov', Press Sluzhba Obshchestvennoi Palaty RF, 25 March 2014, <http://opr.ru/press/news/2014/newsitem/24272> (accessed 27 May 2014).

¹³⁰ 'V Sovet Federatsii podderzhivayut skoreisheye prinyatiye zakona ob obshchestvennom kontrole', Press Tsentri Soveta Federatsii, 24 March 2014, <http://council.gov.ru/press-center/news/40656/> (accessed 27 May 2014).

¹³¹ See "Na obshchestvennom kontrole" – syuzhet telekana "Rossiya 1", v kotorom Iosef Diskin rasskazal o zakone ob obshchestvennom kontrole', Sovet pri Prezidente RF, 20 May 2014, <http://www.president-sovet.ru/news/6185/> (accessed 26 May 2014).

¹³² 'Sovet Federatsii odobril zakon ob obshchestvennim kontrole v Rossii', *RIA Novosti*, 9 July 2014, <http://ria.ru/society/20140709/1015284355.html> (accessed 12 August 2014).

¹³³ 'Federal'nyi zakon Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 21 Iyulya 2014g. N 212-F3 "Ob osnovakh obshchestvennogo kontrolya v Rossiiskoi Federatsii", *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 23 July 2014, <http://www.rg.ru/2014/07/23/zakon-dok.html> (accessed 12 August 2014).

mechanisms and force the authorities to engage with civic initiatives; the other camp believed that the law would hinder the development of new ‘bottom-up’ forms of scrutiny. In the first camp, Andrey Babushkin, author of the law on Public Monitoring Commissions discussed above, stated on his blog, ‘I praised the law for its consistency, good conceptual apparatus, the comprehensive range of subjects of *obshchestvennyi kontrol*’, its versatility, its applicability to the laws connected with prison monitoring.’¹³⁴ In the second camp, researchers at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow who examined the bill were more sceptical. Political scientist Alexey Titkov called it an attempt ‘to establish the rules of the game’ regarding *obshchestvennyi kontrol*’ and to turn it into ‘prescribed and textbook (*shablonnyye*)’ forms of participation, which will act as a barrier to genuine participation of citizens in governance.¹³⁵ Scholar of law, Yuri Tikhomirov, stated that the law was not a ‘constructive’ solution to the problem of civic participation due its many ‘ambiguities’. In his view, ‘at this stage, yet another federal law will only exacerbate the burgeoning legal codex.’¹³⁶

The amendments made by the Presidential Administration brought further criticism. Even the Presidential Council, under whose auspices the law was developed has detailed a number of weaknesses in the law and have expressed dismay at the trajectory the law has taken. First, they have spoken out against the lack of provision of citizens and NGOs to make independent checks without having to access the PCB network. Second, they were also unhappy with the refusal by the government to create a single online portal through which the results of *obshchestvennyi kontrol*’ and reactions by the authorities could be posted. Third, they stated that although the President has expressed the desire that PCBs should not be ‘decorative’ and include only ‘loyal’ people, and although new rules for the formation of PCBs have been developed, comprising competition organised by the Public Chamber, the President has invalidated these rules by stating that they are only valid if other methods of formation have not been selected by the President or

¹³⁴ A. Babushkin, ‘SPCh obsudil zakon ob osnovakh obshchestvennogo kontrolya, delo M. Sabby i kosyaki pri formirovani ONK’, Blog Andrey Babushkina, 7 November 2013, <http://an-babushkin.livejournal.com/72007.html> (accessed 27 May 2014).

¹³⁵ ‘Obshchestvennyi Kontrol’: Nepoliticheskaya Uchastiye Grazhdan v Publichnoye Politike’, Informatsionno-Analiticheskii Biulleten’, Fond “Obshchestvennyi Verdikt”, 2012, No. 1.

¹³⁶ Yu. Tikhomirov, ‘Zaklyucheniye Instituta pravovykh issledovaniy NIU-VShE’, Sovet Pri Prezidente RF, 1 July 2011, http://www.president-sovet.ru/chairman/materials/draft_federal_law/institute_of_legal_studies_niu_school_of_economics.php (accessed 27 May 2014).

by Ministry heads. Finally, they stated that the full contents of the draft law have not been made public, so a full debate on the implications of the law has not been possible. They conclude their analysis with the comment, 'it is not worth hoping that after the passing of the law on *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, officials will immediately change their bureaucratic habits and traditions.'¹³⁷ It is too early to state whether the Presidential Council is right or whether the practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* stipulated in the law have changed government behaviour; this is a subject for future research. However, I show in the following two chapters that existing practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* conducted through the PCB network do make modest changes to state policy.

In sum, this version of the law has codified a conception of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* that sees it as a means for enlisting citizen assistance in the execution of the national development programme. It is understood as a generalised form of monitoring in order to provide the authorities with important feedback on policy from society and to reduce social conflicts. Ironically *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* was one of the factors that led directly to huge 'social conflicts' after the elections, here it is presented as a means to reduce them. Despite both state and society wanting to increase civic participation in governance, and an initial high level of support from civic activists for the proposals, many were very disappointed with what was eventually enshrined in law. The trajectory of this law thus echoes that of the PMC law discussed in the first section and advances the same consensual model of interaction. The state's conception of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* explored in this chapter thus dovetails with the Kremlin's discourse of civic engagement in governance elucidated in the previous chapter: active citizens should assist the state in its predetermined goals so that the country as a whole may progress.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that the authorities have co-opted citizens' attempts to enact alternative practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* by including activists in initial discussions but ultimately disregarding their input and enshrining a conception into law which fits with the unified and apolitical relationship between

¹³⁷ 'Administratsiya Prezidenta dorabotala Proyekt Zakona ob Obshchestvennom Kontrole. "Novaya Politika", Sovet Pri Prezidente RF, 6 March 2014, <http://www.president-sovet.ru/events/5668/> (accessed 27 May 2014).

citizens and the authorities discussed in the previous chapter. In order to establish this, I have elucidated both civic and state conceptions of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, demonstrating that the former understands the concept to mean the practice of holding authorities accountable before the law, while the latter views it as a means for citizens to review the activities and decisions of the authorities. Citizens conduct *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* with the aim of changing state behaviour, while the authorities intend citizens to assist them in the execution of centrally determined goals. I have shown that the Kremlin has ensured that its conception remains hegemonic by co-opting civic initiatives into the network of authoritarian neoliberal governance and fixing the state-driven meaning of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* in law. This builds upon the previous chapter by giving a more in-depth account of the meaning of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* and showing how mechanisms for civic engagement in governance are developed and expanded.

I have also shown that the impetus for civic engagement frequently comes from citizens themselves rather than from above, and that citizens and authorities have often worked together to develop legislation. Hence, the state is often 'catching up' with both discourse and social practices in society; the development of laws relating to *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* is evidence of this process of catching up. The enlistment of citizens in the maintenance of hegemony over the discourse of civic engagement in governance demonstrates limited nature of political participation in Russia, since citizens are able to collaborate with the authorities insofar as they assist them in the fulfilment of state-defined ends. This, as I argued in Chapter Two, is the essence of authoritarian neoliberal governance. The following two chapters explore the ways in which *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* is enacted through the authoritarian neoliberal governance network, that is, through PCBs, in three case regions, and show that citizens have frequently founded PCBs in order to engage with the authorities but that most of them have not inculcated the civic practices of *kontrol'*.

Finally, the struggle for dominance of political language between various groups is, of course, ongoing, even in an authoritarian state. While the law on *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* can be seen as an attempt by the Kremlin to end this struggle by permanently fixing the meaning of this concept in law, authoritarian neoliberal governance is characterised by a limited but nonetheless extant plurality

of voices. It thus represents the latest contribution to this dialogue, not the end of the dialogue.

Chapter Five:

Recontextualisation and Operationalisation in the Centre: *Obshchestvennyi Kontrol'* from Discourse to Action Moscow and St Petersburg

The final two chapters explore the relationship between the discourse and practice of civic engagement in governance in, first, Moscow and St Petersburg and, second, Samara. Each chapter considers two questions: first, how faithfully is national-level discourse rearticulated by local authorities and, second, to what extent is this discourse put into practice by the institutions created to foster civic engagement? To rephrase these questions using CDA terminology, they explore how the central, hegemonic discourse is *recontextualised* by regional leaders for local audiences and examine how far this discourse is *operationalised* in social practices. A consideration of these questions is based on an assumption that discourse and social practices mutually influence but are not reducible to one another and leads to an exploration of the gap between rhetoric and reality, that is, to an analysis of the extent to which the discourse on civic participation in governance articulated by regional authorities differs from the practices of the institutions that claim to enact *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*. The present chapter considers these questions in relation to Moscow and St Petersburg; the following chapter considers them in relation to Samara. Both in Russia's centre and in my regional case study, there is a definite gap between the discourse and action on civic engagement in Russia. The gap indicates that it is short-sighted to dismiss PCBs as mere tools for the manipulation of 'civil society' by the state, as analysis of state discourse alone would suggest. Despite the presentation of PCBs by local leaders as a means to create a harmonious relationship between citizens and authorities, in which the former is subordinate to the latter, PCBs can become sites in which critical opinions are aired and can occasionally influence decision-making.

In order to answer the first question, I have examined mayoral and gubernatorial discourses on civic engagement in government through an analysis of interviews with the leader listed on each regional government website.¹ I have

¹ The titles of the regional heads of the executive all vary slightly in my case studies: Moscow has a mayor (*mer*), Samara has a governor (*gubernator*) and in 1996, the official title of St Petersburg's chief executive was changed from Mayor to governor.

chosen these texts because they are first-person articulations by the heads of the executive branch of regional governments and, as the most public and most powerful political actors in the region, they are likely to articulate regional policy on civic engagement in governance most coherently and most frequently. Moscow and St Petersburg are administratively unique since they are the only two cities to have the status of 'federal subject', the political territorial entities that make up the country.² Therefore, unlike Samara, they do not possess regional and municipal government structures; however, Moscow, of course, also houses federal-level institutions. This means that in the case of Moscow and St Petersburg, regional leaders' discourse relates only to the city, but in the case of Samara, to the whole of the oblast.

In order to answer the second question, I have conducted between 10 and 15 semi-structured interviews with PCB members in each city. I chose to focus on PCBs as representative of this discourse for three reasons. Firstly, these institutions were the first state-driven operationalization of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, as discussed in Chapter One, and many of the other mechanisms discussed in this thesis were instituted after I conducted my fieldwork. Secondly, the local leaders all cite PCBs as a means for increasing civic engagement in governance and, in choosing this particular operationalization, I have ensured a level of comparability across the case studies. Thirdly and most importantly, their centrality to the conduct of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* has been enshrined in the law 'On the Foundations of *Obshchestvennyi Kontrol'* in the Russian Federation', discussed in the previous chapter, which means that all forms of participation must now be conducted through them. They thus constitute the quintessential operationalization of the discourse of civic engagement in governance. The remainder of this introduction discusses the research agendas of recontextualisation and operationalisation before explaining the structure of the chapter.

Recontextualisation refers to a discursive process of meaning transfer from one social, political or geographical context to another; it thus implies a shift in a discourse's original meaning as it is reproduced in the new environment. Following Fairclough, recontextualisation entails a comparison between the original and

² On 11 March 2014 Sevastopol' voted to become a federal city, although its status has not been recognised by the international community. See 'Parlament Kryma prinyal Deklaratsiyu o nezavisimosti ARK i g. Sevastopolya', Gosudarstvennyi Sovet Respubliki Krym, 11 March 2014, http://www.rada.crimea.ua/news/11_03_2014_1 (accessed 14 August 2014).

modified discourses, as well as a consideration of the factors that influenced and shaped the new discourse, that is, the particular environment in which the recontextualisation occurs.³ According to Fairclough, recontextualisation can occur 'across structural (e.g. between education and healthcare) and social boundaries (between local and national scales).⁴ These final two chapters deal with the second of these boundaries: they examine the differences and continuities between federal-level discourse on civic engagement and the discourses articulated by three regional leaders in Moscow, St Petersburg and Samara through a discussion of the regional discourses and their socio-political contexts.

Regional contexts in Russia are widely recognised to vary substantially.⁵ In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the central state lost control over regional institution-building processes, leading to 'great variation in the degree of autonomy that has been permitted for local governments and in the degree of democracy that has been attained at the local level.'⁶ Furthermore, the makeup of Russia's 89 federal subjects is extremely heterogeneous: some are defined ethnically, others territorially; some are densely populated, others sparsely; wealth is concentrated in the metropolises while rural subjects are mostly deprived; and the Constitution accords ethnic republics more powers than to territorially defined subjects.⁷ In order to conceptualise this variation, I refer to what Vladimir Gel'man and Sergei Ryzhenkov have called the 'local regime', a concept they define as,

A complex of political institutions, actors, and the resources and strategies available to them, which determine the conduct of local politics, local policy and local governance.⁸

They claim that local regimes are produced by three factors: first, political opportunity, which refers to gaps or vulnerabilities in the constellation of regional state power-holders; second, regional structural characteristics such as

³ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 20.

⁴ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 20.

⁵ V. Gel'man and C. Ross, (eds.) *The Politics of Sub-National Authoritarianism in Russia* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. xv.

⁶ V. Gel'man in V. Gel'man and A. Evans Jr., (eds.), *The Politics of Local Government in Russia* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), pp. 10.

⁷ C. Ross, *Local Politics and Democratization in Russia* (Oxford: Routledge 2009), pp. 13.

⁸ V. Gel'man and S. Ryzhenkov, 'Local Regimes, Subnational Governance and the 'Power Vertical' in Contemporary Russia', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 63, No. 3, (May 2011).

geographical location and socio-economic profiles; and third, national-level governance patterns and their implementation at the regional level.⁹ However, while it may be tempting to expect significant variations among regional discourses on civic engagement, all three regional leaders were appointed by the President (although Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin was subsequently re-elected in 2013) and are United Russia supporters. Thus, the discourse of each leader attempts, to various extents, to balance Kremlin-level policy with the specificities of the region he has been charged to govern. My analysis shows that each leader rearticulates the central aspects of federal-level discourse on civic engagement in governance by calling for citizens to take part in governance, claiming to support and develop the devolution of powers to local government, and advocating the PCB network. Differences become apparent in each leader's governing style, with the Moscow mayor presenting the most innovative ideas for urban citizens with high levels of internet activity, the St Petersburg governor displaying the least interest in increasing civic participation and the Samara governor most ardently advocating the Putinist discourse.

Regarding the second question, operationalization is defined by Fairclough as the 'putting into practice, "translating" of discourse into both discursive and non-discursive elements.¹⁰ As a research agenda, it examines the extent to which the practices imagined in the discourse become substantive. There are three ways in which a discourse might be operationalized: it may be enacted as a mode of social relations through new ways of interacting (such citizens assisting the authorities); it may be inculcated through the production new identities (such as the 'public inspector'); or it may be materialized in new mechanisms of production or spatial organisation (such as the production of PCB reports).¹¹ My interest in these final two chapters relates to the first of these: how far is the discourse of the active but obedient citizen reproduced in state-society relations at the regional level?

In order to answer this question, I have asked 36 PCB members in Moscow, St Petersburg and Samara about their experiences inside these bodies and have compared their responses with the mayoral/gubernatorial discourse. In each case study, I have, first, summarised the diverse views members hold of PCBs and,

⁹ Gel'man and Ryzhenkov, 'Local Regimes, Subnational Governance and the 'Power Vertical' in Contemporary Russia'.

¹⁰ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, pp. 504.

¹¹ N. Fairclough, 'Discourse in processes of social change: "Transition" in Central and Eastern Europe', available at www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/staff/norman/paper1.doc (accessed 24 June 2014).

second, given thick descriptions of the activities of one or two contrasting PCBs. It is important to note that these practices are at the very early stages of consolidation and there was a wide range of views regarding the role and purpose of PCBs. Thus, I have used the categories of 'supporter', 'reformer' and 'abolitionist' to explore respondents' attitudes towards PCBs. Supporters are in favour of the PCB phenomenon and discuss the institutions' merits and possibilities for expansion. Reformers feel that, in principle, PCBs are a useful tool for engaging with the authorities but that they should be reformed so that they operationalise a more critical form of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*. For the abolitionists, PCBs are unnecessary and unworkable and should therefore be dissolved. Across all three case studies, the biggest group was the reformers, who tended to call for a reform of the selection process to PCBs. Abolitionists were the second biggest group, who either believed that cooperation with the regime was a form of collusion or that the development of PCBs inhibited the growth of other democratic institutions such as elections. Only two respondents, both located in Samara and discussed in the following chapter, could be classified as supporters and used the PCB network successfully to advance the agendas of the NGOs to which they were affiliated. Moscow hosted the largest number of reformers; in St Petersburg, respondents were largely dismissive of PCBs; in Samara, critical and anti-government views were expressed most rarely.

I explore the social practices produced by PCBs through an in-depth discussion of two or three contrasting PCBs in each region. The analysis shows that while the views of PCBs vary among my case studies, the practices that occur inside them are similar. The extent to which citizens may engage in the political process through PCBs depends on the following three factors: the number of forthright and enthusiastic citizens there are inside a particular PCB, the extent to which the topic discussed by the PCB is a priority for the authorities, and the authorities' openness to its recommendations. PCBs are likely to be most active when they deal with themes that are not perceived by the authorities to threaten political stability, such as welfare reform, or when they are charged with clear, legally defined mandates, such as prison inspection or regional budget monitoring. In many cases, they do introduce a limited amount of pluralism into political decision-making and therefore cannot always be dismissed as mere 'Potemkin Villages'. This means that there is a small but significant gap between the discourse of civic engagement in

governance articulated by the authorities and the actual practices that occur inside PCBs. The practices occasionally enacted by citizens recall not the consensual relationship between society and the state advanced by the Kremlin in its conception of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, but the contentious activities of citizens' groups discussed in the previous chapter.

This chapter deals with recontextualisation and operationalization in Moscow and St Petersburg. The two most populous cities in Russia share many similarities: both cities have served as Russia's capital city during the country's history, are considered its cultural, educational and economic centres, and play host the highest number of Western tourists, businesses and students as well as the largest number of migrants from the former Soviet Union.¹² Further, average wages are substantially higher than elsewhere and more people identify as 'middle class',¹³ more people are connected to the internet and thus able to access alternative news sources, and there is a higher number of politically active and opposition-minded people.¹⁴ In short, they are the wealthiest and most cosmopolitan cities in the country. This leads one to assume that they would share similar governance patterns and opportunities for civic participation. This, however, is not the case: Moscow's mayor has actively sought to engage citizens in governance and respondents were generally more positive about the possibilities for PCBs to influence the authorities, while the St Petersburg's governor was highly disengaged and respondents viewed PCBs with disdain. This demonstrates the importance of the local regime and mayoral discourse in the kinds of practices that are produced by these bodies.

The chapter is split into two case study sections that deal first with Moscow, then St Petersburg, each of which comprise three subsections. The first of these gives an overview of the local regime; the second addresses the recontextualisation of federal-level representations of civic engagement in governance through an examination of the discourse of regional governors; the third, exploring the social practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, examines citizens' views and experiences of

¹² N. Zubarevich, 'Four Russias: Re-thinking the Post-Soviet Map', *openDemocracy Russia*, 29 March 2012, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/natalia-zubarevich/four-russias-rethinking-post-soviet-map> (accessed 15 August 2014).

¹³ A. Auzan and S. Bobylev, *National Human Development Report for the Russian Federation: Modernization and Human Development* (Moscow, 2011), pp. 9.

¹⁴ E. Chebankova, *Civil Society in Putin's Russia* (Oxford: Routledge 2013), pp. 65.

PCBs. The conclusion of each section highlights the gap between discourse and action in each case study city.

Moscow

In this section, I discuss Moscow's local regime, the discourse on public participation in governance articulated by the Moscow mayor, and the practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* enacted through PCBs as described to me by 15 current or former members. Since Sergei Sobyenin assumed the post of mayor, discourse on the relationship between citizens and the authorities in the capital has changed markedly from the Soviet-era conception perpetuated by the previous incumbent, Yurii Luzhkov, from one that advocated a passive citizenry to one that seeks to increase civic participation in government. The mayor's straightforward rearticulation of the federal-level discourse is enhanced by practical and innovative ways to operationalise the representation of citizens as assistants to the authorities, thus revealing the simultaneous need to balance his compliant relationship to the President with the need to harness the particularities of civic life in the capital, characterised by relative wealth and high levels of activism. However, I also show that PCB members engage with the state-driven mechanisms for civic participation, attempting to use them to challenge the conception of citizens as subservient to the state, occasionally rendering them spaces that operationalise a more conflictual understanding of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* that recalls that articulated by the citizen observers in the previous chapter. Although they fall short of what many members wish for in terms of political participation, some of Moscow's PCBs nonetheless have a limited effect on decision-making and policy outcomes.

Local Regime

Aside from a two-hundred year hiatus, Moscow has always been the most politically important city in Russia, if not Eastern Europe too. Indeed, following the collapse of the Roman and Byzantine Empires, it was considered by some to be the 'third Rome'.¹⁵ Richard Pipes claims that the century and a half of Mongol rule, which lasted from the mid-thirteenth century until 1480 'set the stage for the peculiar type of political authority, blending native and Mongol elements, which arose in

¹⁵ I. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 7.

Moscow once the Golden Horde began to loosen its grip on Russia.¹⁶ In other words, it combined a strict authoritarian leadership with grassroots practices of 'narodovlastiye' [people power] embodied in the *veche*.¹⁷

The city grew up around the Kremlin from the Fourteenth Century onwards and, thanks to good relations between princes of Moscow and the khanate, became an area of relative peace in an otherwise very violent regime. This facilitated the re-seating of the centre of Russian Orthodox Church from Vladimir to Moscow and allowed trade to develop rapidly. Moscow began to occupy a commanding place in Russian political and economic life, and many nobles arrived in the capital after their emancipation from state service in 1762.¹⁸ As for industry, at this time the city contained over a third of all Russia's factories and attracted a continual stream of migrant workers from the provinces. Manufacturing, particularly of textiles, rapidly increased throughout the nineteenth century. Russia's first railway joined Moscow with St Petersburg in 1851, and a further nine lines were laid during the rest of the century.¹⁹ While St Petersburg was considered the country's 'window on Europe', Moscow by this time had assumed the epithet of the 'barometer of [Russia's] inner self.... Its quotidian affairs were the microcosm of the nation's.'²⁰ This has remained a popular characterisation of Moscow to this day.

In 1918, the Bolsheviks moved the seat of government from St Petersburg (then Petrograd) back to Moscow. It became the capital city of the Soviet Union and a focal point for many Soviet projects: it was the testing ground for Soviet forced labour camps and the site of the enormous Palace of the Soviets, which was designed but never built. Stalin proclaimed the city 'the standard bearer of the new epoch,'²¹ and officials began to call Moscow the 'centre' and the rest of the Union the 'periphery' or 'localities.'²² It quickly became the hub for the Soviet middle class, characterised by its complete dependency on state social security on one hand and its 'frustration with ideological repression on the other.'²³

¹⁶ R. Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1974), pp. 57.

¹⁷ The *veche* was a medieval popular assembly common in Slavic countries, including Russia.

¹⁸ A. Schmidt, 'The Restoration of Moscow after 1812', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 40, No. 1, (Spring 1981).

¹⁹ T. Colton, *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995) pp. 36-37.

²⁰ Colton, *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis*, pp. 2.

²¹ Colton, *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis*, pp. 2.

²² Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective*, pp. 110-111.

²³ M. Brie, 'The Moscow Political Regime: The Emergence of a New Urban Political Machine' in Gel'man and Evans Jr. (eds), *The Politics of Local Government in Russia*, pp. 208.

Perestroika, of course, was launched in Moscow and a big part of it entailed 'demokratizatsiya', that is, a 'liberalisation' of the polity, whereby active citizens were encouraged to make informed choices about governance.²⁴ During this time, popular desire to engage with political and social issues skyrocketed and a plethora of public-spirited independent groups was founded. For instance, the Club for Social Initiatives was a grass-roots project intended to help people put ideas for social work into action. Similar groups were soon formed across the Union. According to its charter, the Club's aim was to 'involve broad strata of the population in the process of self-government' and it facilitated numerous projects from the conservation of historic buildings to the provision of welfare to vulnerable people and advising citizens on legal issues.²⁵ Similarly, the Perestroika Club grew out of the Moscow Central Economic-Mathematical Institute in 1987 and became a centre for discussions among the city's intelligentsia; indeed, it was here that the famous Russia NGO *Memorial* was born.²⁶

Such discourses were also prevalent inside the government: shortly before assuming the post of General Secretary, Gorbachev specifically highlighted the need for more self-government and for 'more space to be opened up for the initiative of individual people.'²⁷ As the political centre of the Soviet Union, Moscow was also the breeding ground for projects that eventually induced the collapse of the Communist regime, such as the introduction of multi-party candidates for regional and municipal legislatures. Gorbachev founded the Congress of People's Deputies in 1989, a competitively elected supreme legislative body intended to divide the Communist Party and the state. One of his critics, Boris Yeltsin, was elected Moscow's delegate; of course, Yeltsin went on to become the third competitively elected ruler of Russia in history, following Gorbachev's resignation in the aftermath of the August 1991 coup.

However, like elsewhere in Russia, the explosion in civic participation in governance in Moscow receded sharply during the 1990s and the open atmosphere

²⁴ A. Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 155.

²⁵ G. Hosking, *The Awakening of the Soviet Union*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 72.

²⁶ '24th Anniversary of Founding of Memorial Society', *Rights in Russia*, 28 January 2013, <http://hro.rightsinrussia.info/archive/ngos/ngos/memorial/24th-anniversary> (accessed 14 August 2014).

²⁷ Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, pp. 79.

in government also began to fade.²⁸ The city's post-Soviet political regime has been described by Michael Brie as a re-creation of the highly personalised system of rule reminiscent of Soviet times and earlier.²⁹ This system was built by then mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, a former high-ranking communist functionary (and later one of the founders of United Russia party), who, having been appointed city mayor in 1993, quickly filled the city Duma with loyal deputies. After re-election in 1996, in which he received over 89% of the popular vote, Luzhkov continued the project of centralising local government apparatus, appointing his representatives in the city's administrative districts.³⁰ According to Brie, he created a 'party of power', which could 'command the entire city administration, distribute the budget and buy influential persons or groups.'³¹ At the same time, Luzhkov managed to retain the Soviet-era levels of social welfare, ensuring that he remained popular among the city's inhabitants.³² Due to his close connections to Yeltsin, he wielded considerable influence at the federal level, thus ensuring favourable outcomes in the inevitable conflicts that arose as a result of federal and municipal bureaucrats squabbling over resource allocation. He thus fostered passive approval among city residents while simultaneously attempting to ensure that his power remained unchallenged at the elite level. Mobilising citizens in city governance was not a priority for the mayor.

Luzhkov began a campaign to run for President in the 2000 elections, standing against Vladimir Putin, but withdrew when it became clear that the Kremlin favoured the latter as Yeltsin's successor, and eventually gave Putin his blessing.³³ During that time, he was implicated in numerous corruption scandals and his popularity steadily declined, with a mere 36% of Moscow residents professing a positive attitude towards him in 2009.³⁴ He remained Mayor of Moscow until 2010 when he was ousted by Dmitry Medvedev for criticising Medvedev's decision to freeze construction of the highly controversial Moscow-St Petersburg motorway

²⁸ See M. Howard, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²⁹ M. Brie, 'The Moscow Political Regime: The Emergence of a New Urban Political Machine' in Gel'man and Evans Jr. (eds), *The Politics of Local Government in Russia*, pp. 210.

³⁰ Brie 'The Moscow Political Regime: The Emergence of a New Urban Political Machine' in Gel'man and Evans Jr. (eds), *The Politics of Local Government in Russia*, pp. 205.

³¹ Brie, 'The Moscow Political Regime: The Emergence of a New Urban Political Machine' in Gel'man and Evans Jr. (eds), *The Politics of Local Government in Russia*, pp. 211.

³² Brie, 'The Moscow Political Regime: The Emergence of a New Urban Political Machine' in Gel'man and Evans Jr. (eds), *The Politics of Local Government in Russia*, pp. 215.

³³ R. Sakwa, *Putin: Russia's Choice*, 2nd Edition, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 30.

³⁴ R. Oliphant, 'Last Man Standing', *Russia Profile.org*, 14 September 2010, <http://www.russiaprofile.org/politics/a1284487040.html> (accessed 17 July 2013).

through Khimki Forest.³⁵ Luzhkov's removal has been interpreted as a typical authoritarian 'divide and conquer' strategy for the prevention of open intra-elite conflicts and reinforces the fact that governance in the capital is ultimately adjudicated by the President.³⁶

In October 2010, Medvedev appointed the chief of Kremlin staff and Putin's 'right hand man' Sergei Sobyenin to replace Luzhkov.³⁷ However, Sobyenin, another top official in United Russia and an oft-speculated successor to Putin as Russian President,³⁸ resigned suddenly in June 2013, two years before his term expired.³⁹ Gubernatorial elections had been re-instated the previous year and Sobyenin decided to re-run for the post, holding snap elections that autumn. While he stated that this was because he required a 'minimum consensus' from the Muscovites in order to manage the city legitimately,⁴⁰ critics argued that opposition candidates would have barely any time to prepare their own campaign.⁴¹ The decision is indicative of Sobyenin's approach to civic engagement, which appears to recognise citizens as important allies in the running of the city (and is discussed in detail in the following sub-section). Duly, of a list of 39 candidates that included opposition figures Alexey Naval'nyi and Mikhail Prokhorov, he was re-elected Mayor of Moscow in September 2013 with 51.3% of the vote, thus narrowly avoiding a second round of elections.⁴² Since re-election, he has sought actively to encourage citizens to become involved in certain areas of governance, devising innovative schemes to harness society's capacity to monitor the local environment. Such an approach appears to be popular with Muscovites: according to an October 2013 survey by the

³⁵ 'Luzhkov Deputy Expects New Moscow Mayor by End of October', *RIA Novosti*, 28 September 2010, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20100928/160756575.html> (accessed 18 July 2013).

³⁶ Gel'man and Ryzhenkov, 'Local Regimes, Subnational Governance and the 'Power Vertical' in Contemporary Russia.'

³⁷ A. Shiryayevskaya and P. Henry, 'Medvedev Chooses Sobyenin as Moscow Mayor after Firing Luzhkov', *Bloomberg*, 15 October 2010, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-10-15/medvedev-names-putin-aide-sobyenin-to-be-moscow-mayor-after-firing-luzhkov.html> (accessed 15 June 2014).

³⁸ 'Sobyenin Sergei Semyonovich', *Edinaya Rossiya Moskva*, <http://moscow.er.ru/persons/346/> (accessed 18 July 2013).

³⁹ N. Krainova, 'Poll shows Sobyenin with huge lead in mayoral race', *The Moscow Times*, 10 July 2013, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/poll-shows-sobyenin-with-huge-lead-in-mayoral-race/483005.html> (accessed 18 July 2013).

⁴⁰ 'Interv'yu – Sergei Sobyenin, vrio Mera Moskv', *Vedomosti*, 6 August 2013, <http://www.vedomosti.ru/library/news/14969351/intervyu-sergej-sobyenin-vrio-mera-moskv?full#cut> (accessed 11 June 2014).

⁴¹ B. Whitmore, 'In Moscow Election, the Fix is in – Or is it?', *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 4 June 2013, <http://www.rferl.org/content/in-moscow-mayors-race-the-fix-is-in-or-is-it/25007162.html> (accessed 18 July 2013).

⁴² 'Putin Ally Sergei Sobyenin wins Moscow Mayor Election', *BBC News*, 9 September 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-24004840> (accessed 15 June 2014).

independent polling organisation Levada Centre, 79% of respondents rated Sobyenin's work as mayor 'average' or higher.⁴³

Today, Moscow is the easily the most populous city in Europe, with 11.5 million inhabitants according to the 2010 census.⁴⁴ It is the wealthiest city in Russia and has the highest human development index in the country⁴⁵ as well as the highest GDP:⁴⁶ the average salary in Moscow is just under 17,500 USD per annum,⁴⁷ much higher than the national average of nearly 11,000 USD.⁴⁸ Thus, as one would expect, there is a high level of public activity and a diverse spectrum of social groups operate in the capital. NGOs receive a relatively large amount of support from the Moscow government: grant competitions for NGOs who execute 'socially meaningful' projects have been held since 1996, although the objectivity of the selection process has been questioned.⁴⁹ Until the law on Foreign Agents came into force⁵⁰, Moscow hosted the largest number of foreign-financed NGOs, with many donor organisations and other transnational actors situating their Russia branches in Moscow.⁵¹ Thus, a larger number of professionalised, well-funded groups exist in the capital than elsewhere. Similarly, formal mechanisms for co-operation between local authorities and NGOs are much more developed than elsewhere in Russia; however, the sheer magnitude of the city also means that NGOs can more easily go unnoticed.⁵² The capital, therefore, is likely to display the most developed practices of civic participation in governance, given the relative wealth, the high number of socially active groups, the mayor's enthusiasm for engaging citizens and the fact that it hosts both federal and regional political institutions.

⁴³ 'Moskvichi o svoem nastroyenii, zhizni i S. Sobyanine', *Levada-Tsentr*, 22 October 2013, <http://www.levada.ru/22-10-2013/moskvichi-o-svoem-nastroenii-zhizni-i-s-sobyanine> (accessed 23 June 2014).

⁴⁴ H. Mosmuller, 'Moscow Population: Capital May Hold 17 Million People', *The Telegraph*, 3 June 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sponsored/rbth/society/8555676/Moscow-17-million-people.html> (accessed 17 July 2013).

⁴⁵ A. Auzan and S. Bobylev, *National Human Development Report for the Russian Federation: Modernization and Human Development* (Moscow, 2011), pp. 138.

⁴⁶ RIA Rating, *Reiting Sotsial'no-Ekonomisticheskogo Polozheniya Subyektov RF: Itogi 2011 Goda*, (Moscow, 2012).

⁴⁷ 'Srednemesyachnaya Zarplata V Moskve perevysla 45 tysyach rublei', *Interfax*, 1 December 2012, <http://www.interfax.ru/moscow/news.asp?id=278586> (accessed 17th April 2013).

⁴⁸ 'Srednyaya zarplata v Rossii vyrastet do 28,8 tyshyach', *RBK*, 2 October 2012, <http://top.rbc.ru/economics/02/10/2012/672412.shtml> (accessed 17 April 2013).

⁴⁹ L. Sundstrom, *Funding Civil Society: Foreign Assistance and NGO Development in Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 107.

⁵⁰ See Chapter Three for a discussion of this law.

⁵¹ Sundstrom, *Funding Civil Society*, pp. 112.

⁵² Sundstrom, *Funding Civil Society*, pp. 108-9.

This brief discussion has given a flavour of Moscow's socio-political environment and has identified some trends and influencing factors in governance and public participation the capital. The city has both a history of top-down leadership and the highest concentration of active citizens and civic groups in the country. Managing these competing structural factors constitutes the mayor's main task. Furthermore, in the wake of Luzhkov's decline in popularity, Sobyenin has the difficult job of regaining the public trust in regional government and providing avenues for civic engagement that do not threaten the power vertical. For while the mayor is a highly powerful figure at the regional level, his actions are ultimately guided by the President and failure to implement dictates from the top can result in removal. We may therefore expect the most innovative mechanisms for authoritarian neoliberal governance to exist in the capital in an attempt to harness its high levels of activism in non-confrontational ways. I now turn to a discussion of Sobyenin's discourse of civic engagement.

Recontextualisation

In this section, I examine the extent to which the Moscow regional authorities adapt federal-level discourse to suit the social and political realities in their jurisdiction. As discussed above, Yuri Luzhkov operationalised a 'Soviet-style' approach to governing the city: a highly personalised and centralised system with few state-sanctioned opportunities for citizens to engage with the authorities. Sergei Sobyenin, in contrast, considered himself to have changed the ideology of governance in the city: according to the mayor, his administration has become more open and responsive to the needs of citizens than his predecessor.⁵³ Given Sobyenin's close connections to President Putin, as well as the unique status of Moscow as housing both federal and city-level administrations, it is unsurprising that his discourse on one hand displays a high level of conformity with the federal level but, on the other, attempts to reach out to citizens by presenting concrete ways in which they can get involved. He thus presents numerous new mechanisms intended to operationalise the Putinist conception of civic engagement in governance.⁵⁴

⁵³ 'Sergei Sobyenin: Moskvichi, bud'te aktivneye v obsuzhdenii gorodskikh problem, ne prokhodite mimo', *Vechernyaya Moskva*, 9 December 2013, <http://vm.ru/news/2013/12/09/sergej-sobyenin-moskvichi-budte-aktivnee-v-obsuzhdenii-gorodskih-problem-ne-prohodite-mimo-226291.html> (accessed 10 June 2014).

⁵⁴ In order to demonstrate this, I have searched all his interviews published in web-based news sites (i.e. not television or radio), listed on the mayoral site mos.ru between 21 April 2011 and 19 June

Firstly, there are echoes of Putin's legitimating narrative of the 'global race' in the way in which Sobyenin frames his discussion of social problems. The mayor states,

Moscow is located in a competitive environment - both politically and economically. If we do not move forward as quickly as possible, we will not keep up with any of the other global cities. We are not in the first place as it is. And if we do not move quickly, then we shall die as a global city. We cannot afford this.⁵⁵

His bewildering but dramatic warning of Moscow 'dying' if it does not remain competitive is reminiscent of the unspecified disastrous fate that could befall an uncompetitive Russia according to Putin, and the vagueness of what the key concepts in this vision – 'competition' and 'moving forward' – are seen to consist of, remain equally nebulous in Putin's rhetoric. There are also frequent comparisons between Moscow and other capitals, either in specific terms of the way in which other metropolises deal with particular issues or in general terms about what Moscow's 'brand' should be or which capital city is the mayor's favourite (the answer was, of course, Moscow).⁵⁶ Such references underline the ideology of competition among capital cities held by the mayor and demonstrate his ongoing rearticulation of federal-level discourses of the global race.

Similarly, Sobyenin, like Putin, believes that citizens' engagement should be motivated by a sense of patriotic duty. In response to a question asking for his views on 'The biggest question for Russia', a project run by the newspaper *Argumenty i Fakty*, the mayor stated that, for him the most important question is, 'What have I done for my country?'. In his view, not only should citizens' activity be directed towards assisting the state, but before asking something of the state, citizens should

2014 - 37 in total - for representations of his vision of civic engagement in the governing of Moscow. Most of these texts are devoted to discussing questions relating to city welfare provision, public infrastructure, social problems, and topical political questions such as the decision to hold mayoral elections and the re-drawing of Moscow city's borders. However, in these interviews, Sobyenin does make numerous fleeting references to his understanding of the role of the citizen in governance and it is virtually identical to that of Putin discussed in Chapter Three.

⁵⁵ 'Mer Moskv Sergei Sobyenin v "KP": O migrantakh, stroitel'stve mechetey i bor'be s korruptsiyei', *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, 20 December 2012, <http://msk.kp.ru/daily/26005.4/2930456/> (accessed 11 June 2014).

⁵⁶ A. Nikolayeva and A. Bogomolov 'Nuzhnye i Demokratii i Vlast', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 30 May 2013, http://www.mn.ru/moscow_authority/20130530/347635870.html (accessed 11 June 2014).

question what they have done to deserve something from it. His elaboration of this question strongly echoes Putin's discourse: iterating the importance of shaking off Soviet-era passivity, he states,

We all came from the Soviet Union, where we were constantly saying to ourselves, we don't have to take care of ourselves, it is the state's responsibility. You just go to work, to the production line, do what you're told, and nothing more.⁵⁷

According to the Mayor, after *perestroika*, which saw a brief increase in civic engagement, the precarious economic situation of the 1990s dampened public spirit: 'Frightened of freedom and responsibility, we again shied away in the other direction; again we began to ask for help.' However, while increased reliance on the state may have been an understandable response to the chaos, it is not one that will help Russia win the global race (although, unsurprisingly given his role as head of service provision for the city of Moscow, Sobyenin is much more delicate than Putin in addressing the relationship between welfare provision and the citizen). Rather than explicitly announcing that the era of the welfare state is over, he states obliquely, 'but we are already living in other realities', before conceding that 'of course, a lot depends on the state: it should provide free education, sound health, good roads.' However, in attempting gently to inculcate the idea of a reciprocal relationship between citizens and the state, he concludes,

But before you demand something from someone still need to ask yourself the question: "What did I did to become successful? How can I help my country?"⁵⁸

The message here is that patriotic citizens should not rely too greatly on the state, but instead become active in service of the state, a representation of governance identical (though more subtly conveyed) to that of Putin.

⁵⁷ 'Sergei Sobyenin: "Chto ya sam sdelal dlya strany?"', *Argumenty i Fakty*, 4 September 2014, <http://www.aif.ru/politics/russia/46492> (accessed 11 June 2014).

⁵⁸ 'Sergei Sobyenin: "Chto ya sam sdelal dlya strany?"'.

As the mayor elaborates on the specificities of participatory opportunities for citizens in Moscow, he admits that building the resources for on-going dialogue between state and society has been a challenge. He states,

The larger the city, the more the authorities are isolated from the public and there are fewer opportunities for citizens to bring problems before the mayor and to demand change.⁵⁹

Furthermore, the mayor recognises that local particularities play an important role in shaping opportunities for citizens to get involved. The particular dynamic of Moscow with its comparatively vibrant public sphere means that mechanisms that encourage civic engagement are especially important in the mayor's view: 'Moscow is a very special city, a democratic city. It is politicized. It is impossible not to take citizens' opinions into account.'⁶⁰ In his interviews, he presents three initiatives, which he claims are the result of much thought regarding the preferred style of relationship between the authorities and citizens in the capital⁶¹: first, he has given district authorities more powers to resolve local issues; second, he has overseen the creation of a website to which citizens can upload complaints, observations and questions; and, third, he has expanded the network of public councils to virtually all city-level government departments.⁶²

Sobyanin describes the first of these as a devolution of powers to district-level government on issues relating to budget formation and housing maintenance. Devolution is a federal-level policy, promoted to virtually all regions as part of Medvedev's modernisation programme to reform the Soviet-era administrative system. According to Sobyanin, the total amount of funds available to Moscow's municipalities has never been greater. He describes his vision of local government in the following way:

The executive authorities should be concentrated in the city administration, and at the local level we should build up rights associated with the distribution of the budget, monitoring activities

⁵⁹ Nikolayeva and Bogomolov, 'Nuzhniye i Demokratii i Vlast'.

⁶⁰ Nikolayeva and Bogomolov, 'Nuzhniye i Demokratii i Vlast'.

⁶¹ Nikolayeva and Bogomolov, 'Nuzhniye i Demokratii i Vlast'.

⁶² Nikolayeva and Bogomolov, 'Nuzhniye i Demokratii i Vlast'.

relating to construction and production, monitoring the authorities, and so on.⁶³

In other words, while the central city authorities should manage the 'big picture' in terms of city management and decision-making, locals in their particular district of Moscow should perform tasks relating to budget allocation, overseeing new building projects and the general monitoring of the activities of local government officials. Couching these tasks in a rhetoric of rights implies that they should be seen as a fundamental aspect of citizenship, something that the mayor has fought to provide for the citizens, and an opportunity that citizens should readily grasp.

The second initiative promoted by the mayor in his interviews consists of an online governance portal, *Nash Gorod* (Our City), which allows every citizen to interact with the authorities by monitoring their surroundings and uploading evidence of irregularities to the site via their smartphones. Authorities may thereby gauge public opinion concerning topical issues and locals can highlight poor quality roads and inadequate public services. With the slogan 'Let's govern together' (*upravlayem vmeste*)⁶⁴, it forms a key part of Sobyanin's discourse of civic engagement⁶⁵ – he references the project in the majority of interviews in which civic involvement in governance is addressed, and it is clearly something of which Sobyanin is proud. He states,

You know, I have seen many sites and city portals. Paris, New York, London... Some of them are very beautiful. But such a site where all citizens can ask the Mayor a question and be sure that they will be heard... exists nowhere else in the world. Nowhere! Our portal is the only one of its kind and I'm proud of it.⁶⁶

⁶³ 'Moskva: ne gosudarstvo v gosudarstve', Lenta.ru, 15 October 2013, <http://lenta.ru/articles/2013/10/15/sobyanin/> (accessed 10 June 2014).

⁶⁴ See Moskva Nash Gorod, <http://gorod.mos.ru/> (accessed 13 June 2014).

⁶⁵ 'Sergei Sobyanin: Khotelos by sdelat' Moskvu pomyagche, podopree. Gorodom komfortnym i udobnym', *Vechernyaya Moskva*, 12 February 2012, <http://m.vm.ru/news/sergei-sobyanin-khotelos-by-sdelat-moskvu-pomyagche-podobree-gorodom-komfortnim-i-ydobnim--1329067259.html> (accessed 12 June 2014).

⁶⁶ L. Protsenko, 'Mer dostupen v rezhim onlain', *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 22 April 2014, <http://m.rg.ru/2014/04/21/sobyanin-site.html> (accessed 14 August 2014).

The idea is that citizens can be the authorities' 'eyes and ears' on the ground, alerting them to problems that need resolving. It is thus an apolitical participatory mechanism tailored for busy, urban citizens with access to smart phone technology, which can harness citizens' energy to improve the local community without challenging decision-making. Advocating the *Nash Gorod* website, Sobyanin states,

Thus, a city resident is transformed into an additional inspector and assistant in managing the city. The number of Muscovites who are willing and able actively to participate in these processes go into in the millions. And it is a great support for managing the city.⁶⁷

The mayor thereby presents a consensual relationship between the authorities and citizens, with the input of the latter limited to apolitical issues and channelled into non-confrontational fora. It recalls the federal-level discourse of citizens becoming active by assisting the state in the execution of tasks designed by the state.

The third frequently mentioned mechanism to increase public participation in governance is the expansion of the system of public councils. These bodies are alluded to in several interviews, but are taken for granted as a good thing, with no justification given for them. This suggests that the idea of the PCB network has become so normalised in the authorities' understanding of civic engagement in governance that they do not need a legitimating narrative. The mayor states,

We have formed serious public councils in almost every field, with the assistance of independent experts. Some are better than others, but it is a general trend.⁶⁸

Why this general trend is necessary or laudable remains unspecified in his discourse. The following subsection explores the practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* operationalised by these and other Moscow PCBs.

It is worth mentioning here that two other initiatives operating on the principle that every citizen can assist the authorities in matters of governance have also been

⁶⁷ 'Sergei Sobyanin: Moskvichi pomogayut upravlyat' gorodom', *Vechernyaya Moskva*, 24 December 2012, <http://vm.ru/news/sergei-sobyanin-moskvichi-pomogayut-upravlyat-gorodom1356321918.html> (accessed 11 June 2014).

⁶⁸ 'Vsya eta politizatsiya nichego khoroshego ne dast', *Kommersant Vlast'*, 21 October 2013, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2321493> (accessed 10 June 2014).

created in recent months: the 'Active Citizens' mobile phone app and the 'Public Advisors' initiative. The first of these was introduced at the end of May 2014 and allows citizens to access daily online polls initiated by the authorities that relate to transport, healthcare, education and other issues. In return, participants can win a variety of prizes such as free theatre tickets, an hour's free parking or free bicycle rentals. According to a spokesperson, the app was developed in order 'to maintain constant dialogue' with citizens and 'to motivate proactive residents.'⁶⁹ Similarly, Decree No. 849 of 24 December 2013 created the 'Public Advisors' initiative 'in order to involve citizens in governmental decision making' as an extension of the network of public councils.⁷⁰ According to the newspaper *Moskovskiye Novosti*, public advisors should be

Moscow residents, who take part voluntarily in the implementation of *obshchestvennyi kontrol*', creating a favourable living environment and improving the quality of interaction between the city authorities and the population.⁷¹

In other words, they are envisaged as a go-between for district authorities and residents, bringing residents' concerns to the attention of the authorities and feeding back details of the authorities' activities to residents. To become an advisor, interested citizens must be appointed by the municipality and should be in contact with an array of local groups including the police, home-owners' associations, service providers, NGOs and volunteer groups, keeping abreast of their activities and co-ordinating information flow between them. They thus combine elements of the idea that every citizen can become involved in governance embodied the website and app, the logic of decentralisation behind the strengthening of district governments, and the mediating role intended of public councils. Although it is of course too early to comment on the practices of Public Advisors, critics have argued

⁶⁹ 'Active Citizens app to engage Muscovites in city governance launched on Mayor Sobyanin's orders', *Moscow City Government*, 21 May 2014, http://www.mos.ru/en/authority/activity/citygov/index.php?id_14=29245 (accessed 23 June 2014).

⁷⁰ 'Pravitel'stvo Moskvy: Postanovleniye ot 24 Dekabrya 2013 g. No. 894-PP' <http://base.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc;base=MLAW;n=151244> (accessed 13 June 2014).

⁷¹ 'Moskvichi smogut stat' obshchestvennymi sovetnikami raonnykh uprav', *Moskovskiye Novosti*, 26 December 2013, <http://www.mn.ru/moscow/20131226/366145899.html> (accessed 13 June 2014).

that such a volunteer army is most likely to be populated by retired, socially conservative individuals and thus could be used by United Russia to campaign in the run-up to elections.⁷²

To summarise this discussion, Sobyenin has been much more vocal than his predecessor both in promoting the federal-level ideology of civic engagement and in developing mechanisms that he claims enable citizens to become more active in local governance. While on one hand, his call for more citizens to become active is based on the idea that Soviet-era dependence on the state is over, on the other, the conception of the citizen as an assistant to the state embodied in his discourse implies that participation in the political aspects of governance, such as decision-making and policy formation is limited. In other words, it is a straightforward rearticulation of the discourse promulgated at the federal level, tailored for active, urban and technologically savvy Muscovites. The kind of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* it advocates conceives of the citizen as a willing assistant to state-designed projects, rather than a critical partner, holding the authorities to account. It thus echoes Putin's conception discussed in the previous chapter. I now move on to discuss the operationalization of this discourse in Moscow's myriad PCBs.

Operationalisation

In this section, I explore the practices of civic participation and *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* that take place inside PCBs in Moscow through an analysis of 15 interviews with current or former PCB members in the capital. Most of my respondents were cosmopolitan, professional members of the urban intellectual elite, used to giving interviews with the media or with foreign researchers. Many had studied abroad or had had significant dealings with Western funders, international NGOs, or intergovernmental bodies; they thus frequently held an international perspective, comparing Russian institutional development with the perceived Western experience and grounding their arguments in political theory. My Moscow respondents were therefore able to give a deeper analysis of PCBs than some of the provincial respondents and most were very clear in what they perceived the value and limits of these bodies to be.

⁷² Ye. Vinokurova, 'Sobyeninu naidut tysyachi "obshchestvennyye sovetnikov". Za 3 mlrd rublei', *Znak.com*, 16 January 2014, <http://www.znak.com/moscow/articles/16-01-20-57/101773.html> (accessed 13 June 2014).

In this subsection, I consider first the kind of practices PCB members feel the institutions ought to engender, before discussing what members feel they actually do. To answer the first question, I have employed the categories of ‘supporter’, ‘reformer’ and ‘abolitionist’ presented in the introduction. To answer the second question, given the large number of PCBs and the diversity of practices they produce, I have chosen to explore two case studies, which demonstrate two contrasting social practices. These are the Moscow City Council under the Prosecutor’s Office, considered merely to enhance the Prosecutor’s image, and the Presidential Human Rights Council, considered to act as the Kremlin’s ‘conscience’. The discussion shows that while there is a large amount of variety among PCBs in Moscow in terms of their relationship to the authorities, the majority of my respondents believed that practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol*’ enacted from inside PCBs can and do make limited changes to state policy. Most argue, therefore, that these institutions should be used as sites of contestation with the state.

No one among my Moscow interviewees could be classified as a supporter of the PCB project, since everyone was critical to varying degrees. Surprisingly, the reformers substantially outnumbered the abolitionists, with the latter totalling just four and tending to be either individuals who had spent a substantial amount of time studying or working in the West or Soviet-era dissidents who considered participation in PCBs a form of collusion with the state. It is impossible to generalise about the type of people who tended to advocate PCB reform, since they varied in age, occupation, political leanings and exposure to the West.

Reformers considered PCBs effective when the following two criteria are present: first, the authorities should be ready to ‘take PCBs seriously’ by being open to criticism and willing to engage in joint projects. Second, respected and well-known ‘independent’ individuals should work in them, who can stand up to the authorities when necessary and put forward a critical perspective. A common concern regarding the first point was that authorities do not demonstrate a desire to ‘listen to society’⁷³ with one member recalling of his experience, ‘it’s like a conversation between the deaf and the blind.’⁷⁴ One respondent who had been part of the legislative process behind the development of public councils stated that the problem lay in the institutional dependence of public councils on the government

⁷³ Interview M3.

⁷⁴ Interview M2.

institution to which they are attached. In his view, public councils should be 'real, serious structures, as independent as possible from the government departments to which they belong.'⁷⁵ A popular opinion was that if only the authorities engaged with PCBs, they would become places in which the 'civic position' vis-à-vis various social issues could be defended and upheld.

Regarding the second point, the most common concern was that 'independent' activists were frequently being replaced in PCBs with former officials and with celebrities who knew little about the subjects dealt with by the PCB. Respondents in the 'reformer camp' tended to label PCBs that do not contain such individuals as 'fake',⁷⁶ a 'pseudo-civil society'⁷⁷ or an 'imitation of collaboration between society and the state.'⁷⁸ When asked to explain the difference between 'fake' and 'real' institutions, respondents referred to the fact that human rights activists were excluded from membership. Repeatedly, respondents bemoaned the uncritical position of the 'loyal' PCB members and few seemed to view 'civil society' as comprising a spectrum of views, with most appearing to believe that two categories of member existed: loyal or independent. Several respondents expressed the view that if the selection process could be somehow altered, the number of loyal individuals would reduce and PCBs would be able to function better as platforms for dialogue.⁷⁹

The abolitionists also had two main criticisms. First, it was felt that the expansion of PCBs inhibited the development of 'genuine' institutions of democracy; for instance, one respondent calls them 'substitutes that replace the political institutions of a developed democracy.'⁸⁰ As such, many respondents placed PCBs in the context of growing clampdowns on NGOs and the abolition of elected regional governors. They were seen as a recognition by the state of the need to gauge public mood, particularly in light of the lack of feedback mechanisms associated with Western democracies, such as an independent media and free elections.⁸¹ The second criticism was that constructive dialogue under President Putin is impossible and therefore PCBs will never be able to 'work properly'. Respondents pointed to

⁷⁵ Interview M15.

⁷⁶ Interview M9.

⁷⁷ Interview M4.

⁷⁸ Interview M2.

⁷⁹ Interview M10, M11, M15.

⁸⁰ Interview M13.

⁸¹ Interview M13, M9.

the growing authoritarianism inside the country as an example of the fact that Putin does not want to engage with society and is only using PCBs as means to 'whitewash' his image.⁸² For instance, one respondent stated 'I think these institutions certainly have promise, but only under a change of power.'⁸³ Holders of this view tended to be those who refused to join PCBs on principle or, if they had, had left when Putin returned to power.

Virtually all PCB members, bar one staunch abolitionist, were able to mention an occasion when they had successfully influenced the authorities, either by directly changing state policy or by bringing an issue to the table not previously considered by the authorities. Examples of successful lobbying included the introduction of courts of appeal, improvements in prison conditions through Public Monitoring Commissions, changing the law on military service to exempt PhD students from conscription, reform of public council selection processes, and work on the liberalisation of NGO law in 2009. Moscow PCBs thus were able to influence issues of a higher level of significance for Russian politics than my other case studies, thanks to the fact that the city is the country's political centre.

However, members were under no illusions regarding the limitations of their influence, believing they had leverage in some areas but not in others. Issues relating to Pussy Riot, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Sergei Magnitsky and the law on Foreign Agents were named as areas where the government has refused to change position, despite significant levels of lobbying via PCBs. Several reasons were given for this. One respondent stated that genuine policy debate was only possible on areas that do not touch Putin's power vertical.⁸⁴ Another stated that if certain state departments were already areas of on-going reforms, PCBs would be more likely to influence outcomes.⁸⁵ Some saw 'small' changes in the law such as that relating to PhD students and military service relatively easy to achieve, while bigger questions of departmental reform could only be achieved with 'enormous work.'⁸⁶ A member of a major PCB recalled that research conducted by the PCB had shown that only 5% of their recommendations were adopted by the authorities.⁸⁷

⁸² Interview M8.

⁸³ Interview M1.

⁸⁴ Interview M9.

⁸⁵ Interview M14

⁸⁶ Interview M4.

⁸⁷ Interview M4.

Despite their low levels of influence, many reformers believed the social benefits of PCB membership extended beyond occasional and limited instances of policy change. A commonly expressed view was that PCBs play a role in setting public agendas by speaking publically about controversial issues. PCB meetings and pronouncements can be newsworthy events covered by the media and both state officials and interested members of the public can access these opinions in PCB meetings, some of which at the regional level are open to the public, or on the PCB website, which generally contains transcripts of the discussions. One respondent felt that even though influence may not translate into direct policy change, it still has an 'indirect' influence through the fact that officials are required to listen to PCB members' opinions.⁸⁸ Another stated that since PCBs are enshrined in law and sanctioned by the authorities, the views elucidated from therein are more likely to be considered than those voiced from NGOs or in the opposition media.⁸⁹

Compared to my other case studies, Moscow has the most heterogeneous array of PCBs due to its unique institutional environment of hosting both federal and regional-level PCBs and many respondents were members of both. Opinions were divided regarding the level at which members were most likely to advance their agenda: at the federal level, they have direct access to the country's top decision-makers, including the President; at the regional level, they can help form concrete projects on the ground. Numerous respondents noted the rapid development of PCBs in the last few years, with some poorly functioning PCBs reformed or closed down. For instance, the Moscow City Public Council under Luzhkov was stated to have had an almost non-existent level of interaction and influence and was eventually replaced by the Moscow Public Chamber in 2012; indeed, after Luzhkov exited the post of mayor, city-level PCBs began to work more actively. However, a discussion of the full picture of PCBs in Moscow is beyond the scope of this thesis, as their number stretches into the thousands; I now devote the rest of this section to a discussion of two case study PCBs, the Presidential Human Rights Council and the Public Council under Moscow Prosecutor's Office. The first was founded by Vladimir Putin but is considered a site of genuine discussion and debate around some of the country's most controversial issues while the second is a regional council founded by activists, which has since been co-opted by the prosecutor and

⁸⁸ Interview M15.

⁸⁹ Interview M14.

used as a means to enhance his image. Both councils contain a number of the same people, but the practices operationalised within them are very different. The discussion shows how highly dependent PCBs are on the state body to which they are attached, but that activists nonetheless view them as places in which government can be held to account.

The Presidential Human Rights Council is a federal-level consultative body created by Presidential Decree in 2004 with the aim of assisting the President in matters relating to rights protection, informing the President of the situation regarding rights abuses at home and abroad, and preparing proposals on how to develop civil society and human rights in Russia.⁹⁰ In 2011, the Council was given the additional task of 'promoting processes of liberalisation and modernization in Russian society' and was given the power to propose draft laws (and indeed was tasked with assisting in the drafting of the Law on *Obshchestvennyi Kontrol'* discussed in the previous chapter).⁹¹ It is thus one of the most well-known and influential PCBs in the country and, despite creeping attempts at co-optation by the authorities, is considered to remain relatively independent and vocal. The reason for this, according to my respondents, was due to Ella Panfilova, who headed the Council's anterior organisation, the Presidential Commission for Human Rights, from 2002, remaining in the position until 2010. On her watch, many of the country's most vocal critics of the government joined the body. According to one former member, Panfilova transformed the Council from something 'really unimportant' to 'a real, independent council' by involving 'independent activists' in its work.⁹² Another described her as a 'very active, honest, decent and brave person' with whom it was possible to do 'real work.'⁹³ Another member recalled the 'very harsh speeches' given by Council Members during meetings with Putin, which were posted the following day on the Council website. He stated, 'there is openness, there is independence and the membership turned out to be very strong.'⁹⁴ A respondent who at the time of interview was about to take up a post in the Council stated that the high number of human rights professionals in the organisation meant that it 'has

⁹⁰ 'O Sovete pri Prezidente RF', Sovet pri Prezidente po razvitiyu grazhdanskogo obshchestva i pravam cheloveka, <http://president-sovet.ru/about/> (accessed 8 July 2014).

⁹¹ 'Glava soveta po pravam cheloveka teper' mozhet predlagat' zakonoprojekty', *RIA Novosti*, 4 February 2011, <http://ria.ru/society/20110204/330288360.html> (accessed 8 July 2014).

⁹² Interview M9.

⁹³ Interview M3.

⁹⁴ Interview M4.

a much better reputation than the [Public] Chamber.⁹⁵ Thus, the type of people who work there is considered an important factor in how far a PCB will advance a critical perspective.

A second reason why the Presidential Council was considered a good example of a PCB was that the government was prepared to listen to them. One respondent described how during meetings with Medvedev, he would note down action points assiduously, which would then be turned into action.⁹⁶ Even when recommendations are not adopted, the President is still required to respond by law, and this ensures that dialogue takes place. Several current members said that as soon as they feel that Putin does not listen to them, they will leave.⁹⁷

However, during my fieldwork, the Council underwent some large-scale changes, which led to the resignation of seventeen members. Two main reasons were given: eleven members left as Putin returned to the Presidency in May 2012, stating that it would be hypocritical to advise that same person against whom they organise in the opposition movement.⁹⁸ A second wave of members left in June, declaring that the new selection method of members to the Council, based on a public consultation conducted via the internet, was non-transparent and could be easily manipulated.⁹⁹ It was unclear to what extent the public consultation influenced the decision on whom to appoint and, after voting took place, the number of members was suddenly increased from forty to sixty-five. Bar a few 'celebrities', members of the Council's new composition are not as well-known as those of the previous composition. Respondents felt that the expansion of the Council's membership would mean that it would be much harder to gain consensus on specific issues and, indeed, the practice has begun to emerge of members splitting into factions, publishing recommendations that contradict one another, with one group advocating a critical position and the other adhering to the Kremlin's line.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Interview M14.

⁹⁶ Interview M7.

⁹⁷ Interview M4, M14.

⁹⁸ Interview M9; see 'Yeshchy 6 chelovek pokinuli Sovet po pravam cheloveka pri prezidente', *Snob.ru*, 4 June 2012, <http://www.snob.ru/selected/entry/49619> (accessed 8 July 2014).

⁹⁹ Interview M9; see J. Earle, 'Putin Dumps Presidential Rights Council', *The Moscow Times*, 25 June 2012, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/alexeyeva-dumps-presidential-rights-council/460950.html> (accessed 8 July 2014).

¹⁰⁰ See, for instance, the declarations regarding the 'Dima Yakovlev' bill, preventing American families from adopting Russian children: 'Zayavleniye Soveta pri Prezidente RF po razvitiyu grazhdanskogo obshchestva i pravam cheloveka v svyazi s deistviyami deputatov Gosudarstvennoi Dumi, trebuyushchikh zapretit' usynovleniye rossiiskikh sirot grazhdanam SShA', 23 December 2012, <http://www.president-sovet.ru/news/3294/> and 'Zayavleniye Soveta pri Prezidente RF po razvitiyu grazhdanskogo obshchestva i pravam cheloveka napravlennoye na zashchitu interesov

Several of my respondents were members both of the Human Rights Council and of the Public Council under the Moscow City Prosecutor's Office, a fact that allowed for some interesting comparative discussion. Unlike the Human Rights Council, the initiative for this public council came from human rights activists themselves. In the late 2000s, civil society leaders, among them some of Russia's most well-known activists, such as Lyudmila Alexeeva, Lev Ponomarev and Svetlana Gannushkina, founded the body in order to ensure that the Prosecutor's work was conducted transparently and because they felt that the city courts took the side of the prosecution as a matter of principle.¹⁰¹ The aim was to ensure that the Moscow prosecutor had the opportunity to hear 'civil society's voice' in court cases conducted by the state.¹⁰² Human rights activists were allowed to choose the Council's members and the composition has been described as 'completely rights-oriented'.¹⁰³ However, according to its founder, it is 'a lot less effective than we hoped when we founded it.'¹⁰⁴ One member states that the Prosecutor does not take the Council's recommendations on board: 'Each time it is as if we are meeting for the first time, as if he hears all this for the first time.'¹⁰⁵ Another member states that activists in the Council 'can't find common ground' with the authorities.¹⁰⁶ The implication is that the Prosecutor uses it to enhance the image of his institution, posting photos of Council sessions online on his website.¹⁰⁷ In short, it has been co-opted in service of the Prosecutors' ends. Why do people remain? The most frequently cited response was that there are like-minded individuals there.¹⁰⁸ People also stated that even the vaguest possibility of influencing an outcome and conducting a dialogue with the authorities on the subject of rights made it worth

detei iz Rossii, usynovlennykh za rubezhom', 20 December 2012, <http://www.president-sovet.ru/news/3293/> (accessed 8 July 2014).

¹⁰¹ Interview M3; 'Rasporyazheniye: O vzaimodeistvii organov prokuratury g. Moskvy s pravozashchitnymi i inymi obshchestvennymi organizatsiyami', Tyur'ma i Volya: Tsentr sodeistviya reforme ugolovnogo pravosudiya, 9 October 2006, <http://www.prison.org/law/NKO9.shtml> (accessed 4 July 2014).

¹⁰² Interview M7.

¹⁰³ Interview M2.

¹⁰⁴ Interview M7.

¹⁰⁵ Interview M3.

¹⁰⁶ Interview M2.

¹⁰⁷ See 'V prokurature goroda sostoyalos' zasedaniye Obshchestvennogo Soveta po vzaimodeistviyu s pravozashchitnymi i inymi obshchestvennymi organizatsiyami', Prokuratura Goroda Moskvy, 24 October 2013, http://www.mosproc.ru/news/moscow/v_prokurature_goroda_sostoyalos_zasedanie_obshchestvennogo_soveta_po_vzaimodeystviyu_s_prazozashchit/ (accessed 4 July 2014); also interview M3.

¹⁰⁸ Interview M3.

staying there, even though the actual levels of influence were low.¹⁰⁹ I came across this narrative repeatedly during my fieldwork in all three case study cities.

In sum, although all my Moscow respondents were critical of PCBs, only four of fifteen advocated disengagement with them. For the majority, PCB membership allows social activists to present research for discussion with government officials during meetings and attempt to convince the authorities that their proposals should be adopted. This was considered a valuable opportunity that could be used in the service of society. While, given the diversity of PCBs themselves, there is no clear consensus among my Moscow respondents on the kind of practices being fomented within PCBs, a clear normative opinion is emerging as to which practices they should be fomenting. These include being able to stand up to authorities inside PCBs by presenting them with critical and independent views. However, such a practice is dependent primarily on the openness of authorities to take such views on board and, secondly, on the perspicacity of the PCB member in putting them forward. An absence of these criteria results in PCBs acting as mechanisms of endorsement for the authorities. Despite these contingencies, the majority of my Moscow respondents valued PCBs as platforms for much-needed dialogue between ‘civil society’ and the state and mechanisms through which policy outcomes could occasionally be affected.

Conclusion

This discussion has shown that there is a gap between the Mayor of Moscow’s portrayal of civic engagement in governance in his discourse and the practices that are enacted in the city’s PCBs, in terms of the self-perception of the ‘active citizens’, the kind of relationship between citizens and the authorities produced by PCBs, and the role of PCBs in local governance. First, like the Presidential discourse, the mayor represents citizens as willing and patriotic assistants to the authorities; but PCB members themselves tended to see themselves as helping ‘society’ rather than the state through PCBs. Second, the mayor considered PCBs as a means to operationalise his conception of the harmonious relationship between citizens and the authorities; however, the practices that occur inside PCBs can be confrontational and can occasionally alter

¹⁰⁹ Interview M7.

state policy. Third, although he did not present a legitimating narrative for PCBs specifically, the mayor presented PCBs as a key part of his local governance agenda; the majority of respondents, meanwhile, felt that the authorities do not sufficiently engage with them. These differences suggests that PCB members take these bodies more seriously than the authorities, and use them as part of a broader strategy to advance the agendas of their interest groups. It indicates that the authorities do not have the amount of control over the bodies as is portrayed in state discourse and that PCBs can be a site for contentious politics and in some cases can shape state policy.

Overall, there was a high level of conformity between the federal and regional discourse, but more variation as the discourse was turned into practice. This, of course is to be expected, since it is surely more straightforward to restate something in language than to enact what has been said. However, it also suggests that it is easier to maintain authoritarian control over government than over governance. While Sobyanin faithfully enacted the centre's will, PCBs did not always fulfil the functions intended of them by the authorities and certain alternative, grassroots agendas are sometimes successfully advanced and the level of authoritarian control over these spaces is partial at best. This suggests that the greater diversity of actors included in governance structures, the less likely these structures will be to operate as intended by the authorities.

St Petersburg

In this section, I discuss St Petersburg's local regime, the discourse of public participation in governance articulated by the Governor of St Petersburg, and the practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* enacted through PCBs as described to me in semi-structured interviews with 11 current or former members. I show that tensions between the city's historical authoritarian governance agenda and the high levels of opposition-minded intelligentsia remain to this day and shape the environment for civic participation in governance. For instance, the low level of engagement with citizens on the part of the authorities in St Petersburg means that citizens are less enthusiastic about state-driven mechanisms of civic participation, and the confrontational attitude of some groups discourages the city administration from reaching out.

The discourse articulated by current governor Georgy Poltavchenko is the most conservative and illiberal of all three regional leaders, a fact which correlates with the critical and dismissive attitude towards PCBs evidenced by my interviewees. Most PCBs are perceived to be ineffective, with neither the Governor's administration nor St Petersburg's activist community engaging with them to the level seen in Moscow. Through a discussion of one dysfunctional and two more active PCBs, I show that whether citizens can perform a more critical conception of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* depends to a great extent on whether the authorities are interested in the issues dealt with inside the PCB. If they are, PCB members can help shape policy; if not, they merely approve government decisions. Overall, the gap between discourse and action on civic engagement is therefore smaller than in Moscow, but this is due to a lack of effort to inculcate practices of civic engagement in governance altogether, rather than a greater level of state control over the activities of PCBs.

Local Regime

Built on the back of serf labour under Tsar Peter the Great on the marshy banks of the river Neva from 1703, St Petersburg was the capital of the Russian Empire until 1918 when the revolutionary Bolshevik government moved the capital to Moscow. Until the city's creation, Russia did not have sea access to the Baltic; thus, under Peter, the Russian navy was founded and the city became Russia's most important seaport as well as a focal point for merchants and businessmen.¹¹⁰ From its inception, St Petersburg contained a high level of educated and intellectual individuals: inspired by the architecture of Venice, Amsterdam and Versailles, Peter brought engineers, architects and scientists from all over Europe in order to construct the city according to contemporary European trends.¹¹¹ During the eighteenth century, the Academy of Sciences, the university, and Russia's most famous museums - the Kunstkammer and the Hermitage – were founded. Attracted by St Petersburg's liberal reputation and wealthy inhabitants, writers, artists and composers continued to move to the city throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth

¹¹⁰ A. Wilkinson, 'Introduction' in Cecil, C. and Minchenok, E. (eds.), *St Petersburg: Heritage at Risk* (London: Save Europe's Heritage, 2012), pp. 26.

¹¹¹ A. Margolis, 'The Evolution of St Petersburg: A Brief History', in Cecil and Minchenok, (eds.), *St Petersburg: Heritage at Risk*, pp. 38.

centuries. Literary journals and salons abounded, with some of Europe's most progressive thinkers engaging in debate.¹¹²

At the same time, St Petersburg was home to the opulence and orthodoxy of Russian Tsardom, a fact that made the city ripe for tension between forces of conservatism and enlightenment, such as were manifested in the Decembrist Uprising in December 1825 and, later, the Bolshevik Revolution. Thus, while the city gained the reputation as Russia's 'window on the West'¹¹³, an epithet it has retained to this day, the myriad palaces, as well as the resolutely autocratic monarchy, led others to view it simultaneously as 'the state incarnate'.¹¹⁴ Anton Fedyashin has described this duality as 'enforced enlightenment where the forces of progress and conservatism, freethinking and censorship, education and ignorance were locked in struggle.'¹¹⁵ These two trends, at once liberal and authoritarian, have defined the city's local regime throughout its history, facilitating the tug of war between traditionalists, progressives and radicals, and continues to shape the city's current relationship to the proliferation of PCBs, discussed below.

During the Soviet Union, despite efforts to suppress dissent, Leningrad remained a site of artistic and alternative political ideas, and was the city in which the anti-Stalin opposition was most active.¹¹⁶ Even a decade prior to the launch of *perestroika*, the city was a hotbed of informal anti-Communist groups, most notably *Klub 81*, which held unauthorised poetry readings and even published an uncensored journal that was begrudgingly tolerated by the authorities.¹¹⁷ In the first relatively democratic elections of the Russian Congress of People Deputies in 1990, the Leningrad delegation was the most radically anti-communist, and in Leningrad city Soviet, democratic forces dramatically outnumbered the Communists. In 1991, the city went to restore its pre-Communist name and voted one of the democratic reformers, Anatoly Sobchak, as Mayor.¹¹⁸ In the referendum of 1993, 78.2% of the

¹¹² Fedyashin, *Liberals under Autocracy*, pp. 72.

¹¹³ Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, pp. 11.

¹¹⁴ Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, pp. 31.

¹¹⁵ Fedyashin, *Liberals under Autocracy*, pp. 18.

¹¹⁶ D. Travin, 'Moscow Calling! St Petersburg Loses its TV', *openDemocracy Russia*, 3 December 2009, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/dmitri-travin/moscow-calling-st-petersburg-loses-its-tv> (accessed 17 April 2013).

¹¹⁷ Hosking, *The Awakening of the Soviet Union*, pp. 71.

¹¹⁸ G. Golosov and V. Volkov in C. Ross (ed.), *Regional Politics in Russia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 80.

St Petersburg electorate expressed confidence in Yeltsin, compared with a national average of 58.7%.¹¹⁹

Sobchak's period as the first mayor of post-Soviet St Petersburg was troubled: the clashes between the executive and legislature that occurred at the federal level (and resulted in the 1993 constitutional crisis) were also mirrored in St Petersburg, with Sobchak's government riven by infighting and the city Duma deeply mistrustful of Sobchak's policies.¹²⁰ (This fissure continued into the 2000s – leading Dininio and Orttung to label the St Petersburg local regime 'fractured'.¹²¹) In the early 1990s, crime rates rose by 54%; daily life in the city was characterised by lawlessness, poverty and violence, and while much of this was clearly a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, short-term responsibility in the eyes of the population lay with Sobchak.¹²² Fewer democratic parties made it into the city administration, a fact for which Sobchak was sharply criticised by Yeltsin, once the mayor's staunch supporter.¹²³ In the next round of elections, Sobchak lost to his former deputy, Vladimir Yakovlev, who exploited the divisions between Sobchak and the federal centre,¹²⁴ presenting himself as better able to overcome the tensions among the political elites.¹²⁵ However, Yakovlev's fate as governor was doomed from the start since Putin had been one of Sobchak's protégés and Russia's new President had remained very loyal to him. As a result, Putin took an intense dislike to Yakovlev, perceiving him as a traitor and calling him 'Judas'.¹²⁶ Thus, despite winning the 2000 elections with a landslide victory, the governor eventually resigned

¹¹⁹ Y. Brudny, 'St Petersburg: Election in the Democratic Metropolis' in T. Colton and J. Hough, (eds.), *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institute, 1998), pp. 352.

¹²⁰ S. Erlanger, 'In St Petersburg, a Fight Over Power and Property', *New York Times*, 27 April 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/04/27/world/in-st-petersburg-a-fight-over-power-and-property.html> (accessed 16 June 2014).

¹²¹ P. Dininio and R. Orttung, 'Explaining Patterns of Corruption in the Russian Regions', *World Politics*, Vol. 57, No. 4, (July 2005).

¹²² Brudny, 'St Petersburg: Election in the Democratic Metropolis' in Colton and Hough, (eds.), *Growing Pains*, pp. 354.

¹²³ J. Gallagher, 'Yeltsin Camp Hardly Gloating over Rival's Loss', *The Chicago Tribune*, 4 June 1996, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1996-06-04/news/9606040262_1_sobchak-and-yeltsin-boris-yeltsin-anatoly-sobchak (accessed 16 June 2014).

¹²⁴ C. Belton, 'Thousands Say Farewell to Sobchak', *The Moscow Times*, 25 February 2000, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/thousands-say-farewell-to-sobchak/266254.html> (accessed 16 June 2014).

¹²⁵ M. Zlotnik, 'Russia's Governors: A Force to be Reckoned with', *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 5, No. 2, (Spring 1997).

¹²⁶ A. Jack, *Inside Putin's Russia: Can There Be Reform without Democracy?*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 75.

ahead of schedule in 2003, reportedly under pressure from the federal centre.¹²⁷ According to Helge Blakkisrud, Putin had been keen to replace Yakovlev 'with a member of his inner circle.'¹²⁸ This demonstrated the extent of Putin's control over the leadership of St Petersburg, which has remained to this day.

St Petersburg's third governor, Valentina Matviyenko, an experienced diplomat and federal-level politician, was strongly backed by the Kremlin as Yakovlev's successor; however, she was far less popular with the electorate. After winning a dubious victory in the 2003 gubernatorial elections, marred by low turnout and forced into a second round due to no candidate initially gaining over 50%,¹²⁹ she remained in office for eight years before resigning in 2011 to take up the position of Chairman of the Federation Council, the third highest position in the country.¹³⁰ Matviyenko's legacy in St Petersburg is a mixed one: while she managed to increase the city's budget five-fold and improve living standards among the population, she was deeply criticised for ruining the neoclassical city centre with gaudy modern architecture, mishandling snow-clearing during several particularly harsh winters and suspected nepotism vis-à-vis her son.¹³¹ Three months before her resignation, her approval ratings had dropped to 18%.¹³² Her appointed replacement was Georgii Poltavchenko, a former long-serving KGB officer.¹³³ A self-described 'conservative' and a former member of the Communist Party, his appointment caused surprise among Russian analysts, who noted his lack of colour and charisma, inappropriate for Russia's vibrant second capital.¹³⁴ He has openly admitted that he does not enjoy the public aspects of his work and closed down his

¹²⁷ B. Taylor in P. Reddaway and R. Orttung (eds.), *Dynamics of Russian Politics: Putin's Reform of Federal-Regional Relations* (Lanham, MA: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005) pp. 77.

¹²⁸ H. Blakkisrud, 'Medvedev's New Governors', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (May 2011).

¹²⁹ V. Kovalev, 'St Petersburg Vote Goes into a Runoff', *The Moscow Times*, 23 September 2003, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/st-petersburg-vote-goes-into-a-runoff/235721.html> (accessed 10 July 2014).

¹³⁰ 'Matviyenko takes Russian upper house speaker post', *RIA Novosti*, 21 September 2011, <http://en.ria.ru/russia/20110921/167006509.html> (accessed 15 June 2014).

¹³¹ I. Titova, 'Matviyenko: Her Legacy to the City', *St Petersburg Times*, 24 August 2011, <http://sptimes.ru/story/34443?page=nopages> (accessed 15 June 2014).

¹³² J. Ioffe, 'She's No. 3!', *Foreign Policy*, 24 August 2011, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/08/24/shes_number_3 (accessed 15 June 2014).

¹³³ 'Gorsluzhashchii', *Itogi*, 18 June 2012, <http://www.itogi.ru/delo/2012/25/179096.html> (accessed 14 June 2014).

¹³⁴ B. Whitmore, 'Meet the New Boss (Different from the Old Boss)', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 31 August 2011, http://www.rferl.org/content/st_petersburg_governor_poltavchenko_matviyenko_putin_medvedev/24314080.html (accessed 15 June 2014).

Twitter account a few months after becoming governor.¹³⁵ Although he is no longer formally a member of any political party, he has stated that his sympathies lie with United Russia.¹³⁶

While St Petersburg's formal politics may be characterised by a high level of conformity with the federal centre, the much of the city's relatively well-educated, Europe-facing population have a well-documented propensity for democratic politics. Following on from its Soviet-era history, there are a relatively large number of opposition-minded civic groups in St Petersburg, who seek not collaboration but confrontation with the authorities leading to a somewhat hostile environment between the state and 'civil society'.¹³⁷ In terms of material well-being, it has the second highest human development index after Moscow¹³⁸ as well as the second highest GDP;¹³⁹ this leads one to expect a higher level of public activity by citizens than less affluent regions. In sum, St Petersburg's long history as a site for oppositional civic action on one hand and orthodox leadership on the other means that a certain amount of disconnect between the governor's rhetoric on civic engagement and citizens' experiences of it is to be expected. I now turn to a discussion of Poltavchenko's representation of the role of the citizen in governance.

Recontextualisation

In this section, I discuss the discourse of civic engagement in governance as articulated by Georgii Poltavchenko in his interviews with print and online media outlets between 1 March 2012 and 22 May 2014, archived on the St Petersburg Administration website.¹⁴⁰ Unlike the self-presentation of the Moscow mayor as a public persona keen on engaging with citizens, Poltavchenko has professed a dislike for the public aspects of his work¹⁴¹ and appears rarely in the press,

¹³⁵ D. Glumskov, 'Zhivoi Gorod', *Ekspert Online*, 18 June 2012, <http://expert.ru/northwest/2012/25/zhivoj-gorod/> (accessed 14 June 2014).

¹³⁶ 'U nas ne dolzhno byt' takoi vakkhanalii, kak v Moskve v novykh raionakh', *812 Online*, 20 August 2012, <http://www.online812.ru/2012/08/20/001/> (accessed 14 June 2014).

¹³⁷ A. Uhlin, *Post-Soviet Civil Society: Democratization in Russia and the Baltic States*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), pp. 143.

¹³⁸ A. Auzan and S. Bobylev, *National Human Development Report for the Russian Federation*, pp. 138.

¹³⁹ RIA Rating, *Reiting Sotsial'no-Ekonomisticheskogo Polozheniya Subyektov RF*.

¹⁴⁰ See 'Interv'yu Gubernatora', *Ofitsial'nyi Sait Administratsii Sankt-Peterburga*, <http://gov.spb.ru/governor/interviews/?page=1> (accessed 14 June 2014).

¹⁴¹ 'Georgii Poltavchenko: "Spada obyema investitsii net, no ya by aktsentiroval vnimaniye na otsutstvii kachestvennykh interesnykh investitsionnykh proyektov. Vot ikh my dolzhny prevlekat' (interv'yu zhurnalu "Ekspert Severo-Zapad")' *Ofitsial'nyi Sait Administratsii Sankt Peterburga*, <http://gov.spb.ru/governor/interviews/20/> (accessed 17 June 2014).

articulating his views ‘only when there is a specific reason’.¹⁴² Given the personal history and political leanings of Poltavchenko described above, as well as the status of St Petersburg as Russia’s second city and Putin’s birthplace (and the place where he began his political career), one might expect a straightforward rearticulation of the federal-level discourse here. In fact, there is very little mention of civic engagement in governance in Poltavchenko’s interviews; instead, he devotes much of his rhetoric to economic matters such as investment, industry, privatisation projects and the St Petersburg Economic Forum. Other frequently occurring topics include traffic problems and the expansion of the metro, immigration, public events such and commemorations of the Siege of Leningrad and the World Cup, and the preservation of the historic city centre. References to civic engagement appear in one quarter of the 40 interviews on the website and only in response to questions from journalists; in a further contrast with his Moscow counterpart, the governor merely rearticulates the Kremlin’s general governance formulae without developing it for his constituency. I now build a picture of his discourse from these ten sources and show that it is at once more conservative and more vague than the discourses both of the Mayor of Moscow and the President.

Although, unlike Sobyanin, he does not articulate Putin’s legitimating narrative of the ‘global race’, he does evoke the conservative idea that Russia is facing threats from all sides. Drawing a parallel between the Thirteenth Century prince Alexander Nevsky, who faced Mongol threats from the East and Teutonic Knights from the West, Poltavchenko claims that ‘our culture is also facing danger from both sides’, in the form of the threat of globalisation from the West and immigration from the Central Asian republics.¹⁴³ In contrast to the President, who advocates the development of an economy competitive at the international level as a means for national improvement, Poltavchenko’s vision is thus much more parochial and even seems to prefer a ‘withdrawal’ from globalisation. However, unlike Putin, he does not use this language of besiegement as a platform from which to call citizens to act in defence of the nation ; instead, he goes on to express concern regarding the perceived negative impact of immigration on St Petersburg’s

¹⁴² ‘Chelovek Dela (Interv’yu zhurnalu “Sapsan” No. 10, oktyabrya 2013 goda), *Ofitsial’nyi Sait Administratsii Sankt Peterburga*, 15 October 2012, <http://gov.spb.ru/governor/interviews/663/> (accessed 14 June 2014).

¹⁴³ ‘Rossiya mezhdru dvukh ognei (interv’yu gazete “Politika”(Serbia))’, *Ofitsial’nyi Sait Administratsii Sankt-Peterburga*, 24 February 2014, <http://gov.spb.ru/governor/interviews/992/> (accessed 18 June 2014).

'culture', although he notes that it brings certain economic benefits. This equivocal stance on immigration is also present in discourses at the federal level and in Moscow; however, it is the only point of similarity in what is otherwise a conservative and reactionary view of Russia's place in the world.

Similarly, Poltavchenko employs dramatic rhetoric elsewhere to persuade citizens to unite behind the authorities. For instance, in the run-up to the 2012 Presidential elections, Poltavchenko implied that if the Russian electorate did not vote for Putin, the country would collapse. Using short sentences to convey a sense of urgency in his rhetoric, he stated,

Today our country faces a very serious dilemma. And there are two choices - not three, just two. Either it will go forward. Yes, there may be some problems, but it will move forward. This is the first option. Or it will collapse again. And, God forbid, like in the nineties. And under a certain scenario, it may collapse like in 1917-1918.¹⁴⁴

Reducing the complex set of possible outcomes of the Presidential elections to a single dichotomy between Putin and national ruin implies that there is only one real option for people who do not want a repeat of the chaos of the 1990s. It demonstrates the governor's high level of support for the President (and perhaps a low estimation of his readers' analytical skills). He does not elaborate on what 'going forward' means in terms of concrete policies; rather, it is presented in residual terms as the alternative to collapsing and thus its merits are taken for granted.

Unlike Putin and Sobyenin's use of images of a bleak future to galvanize citizens, the two threats facing Russia discussed here seem to be motivated by a more generalised desire for continuity and the preservation of tradition. He portrays an international system blighted by foreign threats and a domestic system potentially destabilised by the opposition. For Poltavchenko, the best course of action is to prevent change. While Putin used the image of a grim future in order to mobilise citizens to advance the position of Russia internationally, Poltavchenko uses it to entreat citizens to preserve the status quo. This demonstrates the limited

¹⁴⁴ 'Georgii Poltavchenko: "Rossiya ne imeyet prava proigrat"' (interv'yu Baltiiskoi Media-Gruppe), *Ofitsial'nyi Sait Administratsii Sankt-Peterburga*, 2 March 2012, <http://gov.spb.ru/governor/interviews/13/> (accessed 17 June 2014).

vision of St Petersburg's governor: for him, the level at which citizens may be active and affect political outcomes is the domestic, not the international, arena.

As one might expect, continuity exists between federal and St Petersburg discourses on the role of nationalism in encouraging citizens to help their local communities. Like Putin, public spiritedness and nationalism go hand in hand for St Petersburg's governor: he links the two in response to a question about his views on the lack of a 'national idea' in Russia. With somewhat circular reasoning, he claims that Russia's national idea is precisely Russia itself, before stating that inter-generational volunteer activities provide a sense of 'where we came from'. Without explaining his understanding of the connections between Russia as a 'national idea' and the practice of volunteering, he moves on to applaud St Petersburg's community of volunteers, stating that such activities should receive government support:

'But today people have gone further, not only do they go to the official *subbotniki*¹⁴⁵; they organize themselves and do things to improve the space in which they live. Here, of course, we should also help. I think in the long term, efforts connected with the improvement of living environments and initiated by residents should be supported by the government.'¹⁴⁶

Thus, while nature of the relationship between public service and nationalism is left unspecified, it is clear that the governor wants to encourage people to give their time freely in service of the state. This echoes the federal-level discourse, which also presented active citizenship as a patriotic virtue; however, unlike Moscow's mayor, who has developed concrete ways in which citizens can help take care of their environment, Poltavchenko is vague and elusive on his ideas for public participation in this field.

The tool for developing civic engagement in governance most frequently mentioned by the Governor is the devolution of powers to district governments. He

¹⁴⁵ *Subbotniki* are government-organised days of community-related volunteer work, held on a Saturday and normally consisting of such activities as rubbish collection and collecting recyclable materials.

¹⁴⁶ 'Georgii Poltavchenko: Nash gorod fal'shi ne terpit (Interv'yu internet-gazete "Fontanka.ru"), *Ofitsial'nyi Sait Administratsii Sankt-Peterburga*, <http://gov.spb.ru/governor/interviews/547/> (accessed 17 June 2014).

states that residents can become involved in decisions relating to improvements in the local area (*blagoustroistva territorii*), the organisation of leisure activities for local youth, management of 'paid public work' (*oplachivayemaya obshchestvennaya rabota*¹⁴⁷), the temporary employment opportunities for minors and the prevention of drug addiction.¹⁴⁸ Elsewhere, he states that he wants districts to deal with issues relating to smoking and some economic matters (though he does not specify which).¹⁴⁹ Poltavchenko does not explain his rationale for devolution, most likely because it is a nationwide trend and the governor is merely executing federal recommendations. However, in contrast to Sobyanin who painted devolution as a means by which citizens can more effectively monitor the activities of the authorities, the 'powers' given to St Petersburg communities are distinctly apolitical and point towards a state logic of off-loading to citizens rather than engagement with them. Further, this disparate selection of policy areas and the absence of any justification or explanatory statements suggests that the governor does not have a coherent vision for the role that district governments should play in city governance, but rather is rearticulating policy formed from above.

There is just one interview in which the governor goes into detail regarding mechanisms through which citizens can take part in decision-making processes and, curiously, it is an article intended for a Chinese audience.¹⁵⁰ Two mechanisms are mentioned. First, public councils are seen as the primary way in which to engage with the public. Poltavchenko states that they are used to make decisions relating to issues that 'affect the interests of the whole city' and thus have been created in 'critical areas for the city's development', such as economics, industry, investment, the development of small businesses and historical preservation. Such councils, he claims, allow the authorities to give 'maximum consideration to the interests of the people'. Second, he states that important documents, such as the development strategy for St Petersburg until 2035, are posted online for public (*vsenarodnyi*)

¹⁴⁷ 'Paid public works' refer to low-paid manual tasks for the unemployed that are seen to contribute a 'social good', such as road repair, fruit and vegetable harvesting, gardening, care for the elderly and so on. See 'Organizatsiya provedeniya oplachivayemykh obshchestvennykh rabot', <http://gu.spb.ru/services/element.php?ID=4345> (accessed 16 June 2014).

¹⁴⁸ 'V nashom gorode udivitel'naya atmosfera' (interv'yu kitaiskoi gazete "Shenzen Special Zone Daily", *Ofitsial'nyi Sait Administratsii Sankt-Peterburga*, 20 January 2014, <http://gov.spb.ru/governor/interviews/784/> (accessed 17 June 2014).

¹⁴⁹ 'Nash gorod – odin iz samykh spokojnykh s tochki zreniya protestnoi aktivnosti (interview gazete "Vedomosti")', *Ofitsial'nyi Sait Administratsii Sankt-Peterburga*, 17 December 2013, <http://gov.spb.ru/governor/interviews/780/> (accessed 17 June 2014).

¹⁵⁰ 'V nashom gorode udivitel'naya atmosfera' <http://gov.spb.ru/governor/interviews/784/> (accessed 17 June 2014).

discussion so that anyone who wishes can add comments, 'which are summarised and taken into account by developers.' The use of the old-fashioned term '*vsenarodnyi*' rather than the more contemporary '*obshchestvennyi*' situates his discourse in the Soviet era, and evokes ideas of consensus and a collective will. His presentation of these two mechanisms, however, leave more questions than answers as to how citizens' views will be taken into account: like Sobyanin, he does not explain how public councils enable authorities to consider the 'interests' of the population, nor does he highlight how developers will incorporate the views of the public on future projects. Again, this points to the fact that such mechanisms are simple rearticulations from the federal centre.

Summarising his stance on civic engagement, he states, 'we have tried to make sure that mechanisms of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* have kept pace with the times.' In order to do this, he claims, the St Petersburg authorities have maintained close contact with certain independent social organisations (*obshchestvennyye organizatsii*)

Who sincerely wish St Petersburg happiness and prosperity. Not with those who turn a pothole into a reason to make a political scandal, but with those who actually help people and who are themselves ready to work for people.¹⁵¹

This is a divisive way of referring to St Petersburg's heterogeneous NGO community and suggests that the Governor is fearful of groups that speak publically on social issues, preferring apolitical NGOs who are primarily engaged in service provision. The fact that he spells out the kind of people with which the authorities do not want to work in almost as much detail as those with which they do suggests that the governor believes there is a significant number of groups that do not share his vision a good life for the city. His understanding of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* elucidated above implies an evolving process of harmonious collaboration between the authorities and civic groups and is presented as the modern way to ensure dialogue between state and society. The conception advanced here is thoroughly apolitical:

¹⁵¹ 'V nashom gorode udivitel'naya atmosfera' <http://gov.spb.ru/governor/interviews/784/> (accessed 17 June 2014).

the state may work with like-minded groups to fulfil social work. Again, it rearticulates the federal discourse in general but also reactionary terms.

The other articulations concerning Poltavchenko's vision of civic engagement are very brief and often quickly deflect onto other topics. For instance, in response to a question about the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms between the governor and city residents, he proselytises on the complex character of the St Petersburg citizens, stating that they are opinionated and take very little on faith. Because of this, he states, 'I try to listen very carefully to people when I communicate with them on Twitter, when I meet with citizens, as well as during my visits to businesses or during sightseeing.'¹⁵² However, shortly after stating this, he stopped using his Twitter account to engage with citizens, using it only to congratulate his followers at New Year and Easter.¹⁵³ Similarly, when the governor is asked whether he feels the support of the citizens, to which he replies in the affirmative, stating 'We strive to listen and to hear those who criticize us, we attentively deal with any constructive proposal.'¹⁵⁴ However, short of his short-lived Twitter account and his unspecified 'meetings' with citizens, there are no indication of how criticisms and proposals are received or whether and how he encourages citizens to get involved. In response to a question about whether the government is in tune with the city's social movements, the governor responds obliquely that active citizens are one step ahead of the government.¹⁵⁵

In sum, Poltavchenko's articulations on civic participation in governance are conservative, vague and at times reactionary. Unlike Sobyanin who frequently advocated his pet project, *Nash Gorod*, the St Petersburg Governor did not mention any innovative strategies for involving citizens and, in fact at times seems rather afraid of them. It is also telling that some of his most detailed pronouncements on civic engagement appear in publications not intended for a local readership. In local outlets, he simply rearticulates federal trends of devolution and public councils. The

¹⁵² 'Georgii Poltavchenko: Budem podderzhivat' to chto nuzhno i vygodno gorody i gorozhanam (interv'yu informatsionnomu agenstvu ITAR-TASS Sankt-Peterburg) <http://gov.spb.ru/governor/interviews/27/> (accessed 18 June 2014).

¹⁵³ See https://twitter.com/G_Poltavchenko (accessed 18 June 2014).

¹⁵⁴ 'Georgii Poltavchenko: "Spada obyema investitsii net, no ya by aktsentiroval vnimaniye na otsutstvii kachestvennykh interesnykh investitsionnykh proyektov. Vot ikh my dolzhny prevlekat' (interv'yu zhurnalu "Ekspert Severo-Zapad")' *Ofitsial'nyi Sait Administratsii Sankt Peterburga*, <http://gov.spb.ru/governor/interviews/20/> (accessed 17 June 2014).

¹⁵⁵ 'Georgii Poltavchenko: Nash gorod fal'shi ne terpit (Interv'yu internet-gazete "Fontanka.ru"), *Ofitsial'nyi Sait Administratsii Sankt-Peterburga*, <http://gov.spb.ru/governor/interviews/547/> (accessed 17 June 2014).

analysis presented here suggests that the governor considers being a publically accountable politician to be less important than being a manager who attracts investment and maintains stability in the city. It also demonstrates how the individual governing style of regional leaders can produce sub-discourses that diverge from the master discourse. I now discuss the practices of civic participation in the city's PCBs.

Operationalisation

In this section, I explore the practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* articulated by 11 respondents in St Petersburg. Like my Moscow respondents, those in St Petersburg were members of the intellectual elite, who were accustomed to giving interviews, had had frequent dealings with Western organisations, and were often able to present their arguments in a comparative context. Most identified as liberal reformers, having either been dissidents in the Soviet Union or pro-democracy activists during *perestroika*. As with Moscow, there were no unequivocal PCB supporters among my respondents but, in contrast to those in the capital, there were far more abolitionists than reformers, although most of those who described themselves as abolitionists were also PCB members. Overall, my St Petersburg respondents were less keen to discuss PCBs in detail, dismissing them instead as 'fake' or 'decorative', and moving the conversation to topical political issues of the day such as the law on 'Foreign Agents', the Bolotnaya Affair or Pussy Riot. Therefore, while the evidence of social practices inside St Petersburg's PCBs presented below is somewhat limited in relation to my discussions of Moscow and Samara, this in itself indicates the reality of civic participation in governance in St Petersburg. In what follows, I compare, first, the views of St Petersburg's PCB reformers and abolitionists and, second, three examples of functional and dysfunctional PCBs in the city. I show that while respondents' views on what makes a good PCB are largely the same as those in Moscow, the disaffection for civic participation in governance espoused by the governor in his discourse has significantly reduced both the public desire and the ability for city PCBs to act as critical interlocutors with the authorities. Though a discussion of the practices inside in one poorly functioning PCB, the St Petersburg Public Council and two more active PCBs, The Council for the Protection of Cultural Heritage under the St Petersburg Government and St Petersburg Public Monitoring Commission, I show

that PCBs described positively by respondents either pertain to topics that already have a high level of support from the Governor or are concrete, clearly defined. Ultimately, however, practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* in St Petersburg, as with Moscow, depend on the willingness of the authorities to engage with PCBs and to fill them with active members.

It is difficult to categorise St Petersburg respondents as unequivocally reform or abolition oriented, since most people veered between the two viewpoints during the interview. Of the 11 respondents, four were largely for the abolition of PBCs, despite some being members in federal-level bodies. Most people pointed to the importance of dialogue between the authorities and the public and therefore supported the PCB concept in principle because they believed it could create useful sites for the discussion of the city or country's problems, in the absence of 'genuine' platforms for discussion. One respondent described the format as 'very important', as officials are required to defend their decisions 'in front of society'.¹⁵⁶ If PCBs did not exist, another stated, the relationship between society and the state 'would be much worse'.¹⁵⁷ Others felt that, since PCB activities are enshrined in law, giving members the right to access government information and receive formal responses to their recommendations, these bodies were better placed to influence the authorities than civic organisations not connected to the state.¹⁵⁸ Thus, in the country's current authoritarian climate, PCBs were considered to represent one of the few avenues that activists could use to present their campaigns to the government and know that they are required to listen.

However, all respondents stated that most such fora in the city were highly dysfunctional, with the two concerns about PCBs mentioned by Moscow respondents also raised in St Petersburg. First, most PCB members comprised people whom respondents did not consider part of 'civil society', such as actors and businessmen, and would be unlikely to challenge the government. Several respondents relayed stories of how the authorities ignored their suggestions for new members, choosing instead people they considered conservative and apolitical.¹⁵⁹ One reformer stated that in order for PCBs to be useful, membership must comprise people who can speak out, namely vocal and critical members of human rights

¹⁵⁶ Interview SPB12.

¹⁵⁷ Interview SPB11.

¹⁵⁸ Interview SPB1, SPB8.

¹⁵⁹ Interview SPB2, SPB3, SPB11.

organisations.¹⁶⁰ Another stated that the more representatives of ‘really functioning’ organisations there are in a PCB’s composition, the more likely it will be that the PCB is ‘effective’.¹⁶¹ Second, respondents complained that the authorities did not evidence a desire to engage with PCBs and frequently ignored their recommendations.¹⁶² ‘Why do you ask for our proposals if you refuse them?’, asked one, rhetorically.¹⁶³ No one, however, was clear on how these two issues could be resolved, other than changing the government. One respondent stated that such councils could be useful while Russia does not have a ‘normal’ President or parliament. In his words, ‘We don’t need to reform PCBs, but reform Putin!’¹⁶⁴ This goes to the heart of the problem of PCBs’ dependency on the authorities.

The St Petersburg abolitionists’ views were also similar to those voiced in Moscow. Most abolitionists felt that PCBs were created so that the authorities would not have to interact with independent organisations and, if they were abolished, collaboration between the authorities and ‘real’ NGOs could increase.¹⁶⁵ One respondent believed that the government should not collaborate with such GONGOs but with institutions that are ‘not dependent on any government body.’¹⁶⁶ Another stated that PCBs represent a liberalisation of the form but not the content of state-society relations, consisting merely of an ‘image of dialogue’¹⁶⁷ between society and the authorities. Secondly, PCBs membership were seen as supporting the Putin regime. One abolitionist stated that he would refuse membership in the majors PCBs because he did not want to ‘help Putin.’¹⁶⁸ Respondents felt that PCBs were a manifestation of the idea that citizens are there for the purposes of the authorities, not *vice versa*, as they thought it should be.¹⁶⁹ Why did they choose to take part in PCBs if they felt they should be abolished? As with their Moscow counterparts, activists felt that this was the only opportunity they had to present the government with their issues. Although in principle they felt that such structures should not exist, they used them in the absence of anything better. I now move on

¹⁶⁰ Interview SPB7.

¹⁶¹ Interview SPB12.

¹⁶² Interview SPB3, SPB7.

¹⁶³ Interview SPB11.

¹⁶⁴ Interview SPB8.

¹⁶⁵ Interview SPB9.

¹⁶⁶ Interview SPB6.

¹⁶⁷ Interview SPB9.

¹⁶⁸ Interview SPB8.

¹⁶⁹ Interview SPB6.

to examine the extent to which views are enacted in practice in St Petersburg's PCBs.

Numerous respondents stated that the governor does not listen to PCBs. According to one respondent, also a researcher of PCBs at the Higher School of Economics in St Petersburg, the city has more than seven hundred such bodies; however, most of them do not fulfil the tasks for which they were founded. Either members should represent the interests of their organisation or target group to the authorities or they should give policy advice in the capacity of public experts. Instead, the only function they perform is the legitimisation of state policy.¹⁷⁰ My research partially confirms his view, since whether they successfully represent civic interests to the authorities fundamentally depends on whether the authorities are prepared to listen.

St Petersburg Public Council, the city's version of a public chamber (St Petersburg is one of the last federal subjects that does not have a Public Chamber), is held in very low regard by my respondents, and has been described as 'sham'¹⁷¹ that 'imitates human rights protection'.¹⁷² Like the Moscow Public Council under the Prosecutor's Office, it was initiated by a coalition of civil society activists but has since become co-opted by the state body to which it is attached. The activists were inspired by discussions of new institutional sites for collaboration between society and the state during the 2001 Kremlin-organised Moscow Civic Forum and, upon their return, formed the Council under the Governor's Office, with the aim of monitoring the St Petersburg government's activities. However, the governor can select the Council's membership and, as such, he has filled it with famous St Petersburg citizens such as actors and sportspeople; not a single member was considered by my respondents to be critical or independent. It was perceived to be silent on human rights abuses in the city, instead merely approving the governor's decisions. According to one respondent, its only activity consists of distributing awards to notable citizens.¹⁷³ A similar fate occurred with the PCB considered for a long time to be the most effective in the city, the Co-ordinating Council for Co-

¹⁷⁰ Interview SPB1.

¹⁷¹ Interview SPB12.

¹⁷² Interview SPB9.

¹⁷³ Interview SPB1.

operation with Public Associations.¹⁷⁴ It was created by social activists alongside the St Petersburg Legislative Assembly and, according to one of its founders, for a time successfully promoted engagement between the city's NGO community and government departments. However, in 2010, the council's leadership changed; then, in 2011, the governor was changed, who, according to my respondent was highly critical of the Council. The Council has not met once since Poltavchenko came to power.¹⁷⁵

The only two PCBs discussed positively by respondents were The Council for the Protection of Cultural Heritage under the St Petersburg Government, which deals with the conservation of the historical city centre, and the St Petersburg Public Monitoring Commission (PMC). The first of these deals with a matter considered to lie close to the hearts of the majority of citizens,¹⁷⁶ since protecting the historic city from encroaching business interests has been the subject of much civic activism in recent years, (a fact which no doubt contributes to the Council's resonance).¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, it is comprised of genuine experts in the field of conservation, including respected architects, historians, sculptors and leaders of relevant civil society groups. According to one respondent, the Council's recommendations are taken seriously by the governor and it is a 'citywide event' when its advice is ignored.¹⁷⁸ Meetings are open to the public and well attended by the press and, given the status of St Petersburg as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the pronouncements made during meetings are broadcast well beyond the city. It is unsurprising that this Council is considered effective, since the governor also spoke frequently in his interviews about the importance of preserving St Petersburg's cultural heritage. The issue thus has broad support both inside the government and among the population, and the Council's expert membership, as well as the governor's generally favourable reactions to its recommendations enables the Council to function effectively. Other city PCBs considered effective by respondents were the Maritime Council of St Petersburg and the Public Council for Small and Medium Businesses,

¹⁷⁴ Interview SB1; see also L. Petrova and A. Sungurov, 'Instituty-Posredniki mezhdru organami vlasti i obshchestvom: sluchai Sankt-Peterburga', *Voprosy Gosudarstvennogo i Munitsipal'nogo Upravleniya*, Vol. 2, 2012.

¹⁷⁵ Interview SPB1.

¹⁷⁶ Interview SPB2.

¹⁷⁷ See, for instance, M. Zakharov, 'St Petersburg Tower Vertical Defeated. For Now...', *openDemocracy Russia*, 15 December 2010, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/mikhail-zakharov/st-petersburgs-tower-vertical-defeated-for-now> (accessed 13 July 2014).

¹⁷⁸ Interview SPB2.

although this was only hearsay.¹⁷⁹ It would be unsurprising if this rumour were true, since the two issues are also likely to be important for the city government, unlike the Co-ordinating Council for Co-operation with Public Associations, discussed above.

The St Petersburg PMC, was also stated to have had a significant impact on the activities of the local prison authorities, forcing them to make substantial improvements to the city's detention centres. Members stated that, among other things, the St Petersburg PMC has succeeded in closing two dilapidated pre-trial detention centres,¹⁸⁰ reducing overcrowding in cells,¹⁸¹ instigating urgent repairs in various holding centres,¹⁸² and reporting beatings on prisoners (which resulted in the officers being sent to prison).¹⁸³ Again, vital to the Commission's work was the composition of its membership. One respondent stated that in the St Petersburg PMC there was a 'real element of *obshchestvennyi kontrol*' because 'good people' were working there.¹⁸⁴ In contrast to the other PCBs discussed here, my respondents unequivocally viewed the PMC as a human rights organisation, even though members are selected by the Federal Public Chamber.¹⁸⁵ The common view was that if PCBs were formed from below and were filled with critical voices, they could be considered part of 'civil society'. According to one, this was because its members were considered 'people who are really fighting for human rights'.¹⁸⁶ Another stated that the PMC was an example of 'self-organisation of society' because the initiative for the PMC law came about through 'pressure from society'.¹⁸⁷ However, as with many other 'effective' PCBs, respondents stated that there was also a growing attempt to co-opt the city's PMC either by filling it with former officers or by intimidating members when they visit prisons. One respondent stated that the Penitentiary Service's hostile attitude towards PCBs constitutes an 'administrative war'¹⁸⁸ on the Commission and that while the St Petersburg commission is still relatively independent, there are fears that the following composition will be less

¹⁷⁹ Interview SPB1.

¹⁸⁰ Interview SPB5.

¹⁸¹ Interview SPB5.

¹⁸² Interview SPB5.

¹⁸³ Interview SPB6.

¹⁸⁴ Interview SPB12.

¹⁸⁵ Interview SPB7, SPB12, SPB9.

¹⁸⁶ Interview SPB9.

¹⁸⁷ Interview SPB7.

¹⁸⁸ Interview SPB6.

radical. This highlights the ongoing attempts of the authorities to reduce the critical capacity of PCBs considered radical.

In sum, as in Moscow, the extent to which St Petersburg PCBs may practice *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* is determined by the government department responsible for them. However, in contrast to Moscow, the St Petersburg governor has not encouraged the development of mechanisms for engagement with the public and this is reflected in the varied fates of the PCBs discussed above. The governor's Public Council is not considered a platform that enables civic participation, and the Coordinating Council for Cooperation with Public Associations has been ignored. Those that are deemed useful by participants pertain to policy areas in which the authorities are already interested and, arguably, do not threaten the regional power vertical; if they do, they may be subject to attempts at co-optation or will be ignored.

Conclusion

The relationship between discourse and action in St Petersburg is more complex than in Moscow. On the one hand, there is a level of conformity between the two since neither the regional authorities nor respondents are inclined to engage with state-driven mechanisms for civic participation in governance. The governor did not encourage citizens to join PCBs and many respondents reported that the city's PCBs were impotent. On the other hand, this lack of possibilities for collaboration has produced a more confrontational relationship between citizens and the authorities, with the governor stating that he only wanted to engage with certain civic groups and respondents stating that PCB membership merely whitewashes the regime. The present antagonistic relationship can be seen as a continuation of state-society relations in the city that has existed since its foundation and suggests that the role intended for PCBs by the Kremlin in diffusing tension between citizens and local authorities is correct.

However, there is a large gap between federal-level discourse and the social practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* in St Petersburg. This indicates that Poltavchenko has not sufficiently reproduced the Kremlin's vision of citizens helping the state in the name of the country. As a result, PCBs are less active, citizens are less inclined to engage with them, (even, as with Moscow, in order to advance their own critical, grassroots agendas), and a relationship has set in that departs from

the image of the unified people conceived of by the President. This raises the question of why the Kremlin allows Poltavchenko to remain in office.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the local regime, the discourse of civic engagement in governance articulated by regional leaders, and the attitudes and experiences of PCB members in Russia's main metropolises, Moscow and St Petersburg. I have shown how the socio-political context of the two federal cities shapes the discourse of the city leader and how, in turn, these discourses help to construct the limits and possibilities of the practice of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* in the cities' PCBs. The discussions have highlighted that, while irreducible to one another, the relationship between discourse and social practices is co-constitutive, in that one simultaneously registers and affects the other.

In each city, the local regime acts as a backdrop that shapes the relations between the authorities and citizens. This accounts for the substantial variance in the opportunities for civic participation in governance in Russia's two federal cities, despite both sharing high levels of income and large numbers of active citizens. Moscow, as the federal centre, has a close relationship between President and mayor, but also contains the greatest diversity of local groups. St Petersburg exhibits a historic tension between the city management and civic groups. These specificities provide the basis for the significant divergence in practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* outlined in this chapter, in which the engaged and enthusiastic discourse of the Mayor of Moscow was accompanied by more positive experiences recounted by citizens in PCBs, while in St Petersburg, the disengagement of the governor mirrored the scepticism of my respondents. This demonstrates the importance of considering the local regime in the production of political practices in Russia and reinforces the dangers of extrapolating such practices from one region to another.

While the two regions differ widely in terms of local regime, the leaders' rearticulations of the federal-level discourse share a commitment, voiced in varying degrees, to improving local governance and the expansion of the PCB network. Civic engagement was portrayed as a means for citizens to support local government in the performance of certain apolitical tasks, particularly in matters relating to the upkeep of the local area. Public councils were considered by both

leaders as a central mechanism through which to increase civic engagement in governance, but neither explained the role these bodies were intended to play in public life. This suggests that they consider PCBs to have become such a normal part of local governance that they no longer need justification. In short, both leaders faithfully rearticulated the federal level conception of the relationship between citizens and the authorities in which the role of the citizen in governance is seen as a willing assistant in state-designed projects (although with great variance in the degree of enthusiasm). However, this relationship did not always materialise in the practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* enacted through the PCBs. In both regions, examples were given of instances when PCB activities changed state policy, diverging from the Kremlin's conception of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* as citizens fulfilling tasks determined by the authorities. In the case of Moscow, I discussed the Presidential Human Rights Council, whose members reported a 5% take-up rate on their recommendations; in St Petersburg, I showed how the Council for Protection of Cultural Heritage successfully campaigns for the protection of the historic city centre and how the city's PMC has improved conditions in local detention centres. It is therefore shortsighted to dismiss these bodies as 'Potemkin Villages' that merely enhance the reputations of politicians, since they can alter state behaviour.

On the other hand, practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* in both cases were limited by three criteria. First, and most importantly, the authorities must be prepared to engage with citizens; secondly, membership must contain individuals able to advance alternative viewpoints; and, thirdly, the object of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* must be of interest to the governance agenda and receive broad support on both sides of the state-society divide. When these criteria are present, collective shaping of policy can take place; when they are absent, the PCB becomes an uncritical assistant to the authorities. This means that although state discourse promoting PCBs tends to advocate them as a tool for empowering citizens, in practice the reverse is often true. Since the authorities can select PCB members and choose to take on board or dismiss their recommendations, whether or not a PCB provides a platform for citizens to take part in decision-making lies solely in the hands of the authorities. As such, if a policy area is not considered important by the authorities, such as the Public Council under the Prosecutor's Office in Moscow or the Coordinating Council for Collaboration with NGOs in St Petersburg, PCBs operating in that policy area either will remain unused or will be used to feign genuine

collaboration. In the case of general PCBs that act as advisors to regional power-holders, such as St Petersburg Public Council, if the official linked to them does not desire to interact with them, they will also fall silent.

In sum, the limited plurality of voices inside PCBs is characteristic of practices of authoritarian neoliberal governance, which enable a controlled level of civic participation in governance. I have shown in this chapter that regional leaders, to various extents, advocate neoliberal policies of decentralisation, civic engagement and reform of the Soviet-era welfare state (particularly in the case of the Moscow Mayor). In this light, PBCs are seen as a 'roll-out' mechanism that responds to dangers of the modern era in which citizens must play a greater part in assisting and monitoring the authorities in order to help advance their country. However, although the authorities retain substantial control over the membership and agenda of these bodies, in some cases citizens can exploit the gap in full control enabled by limited pluralism to advance certain contentious agendas.

Chapter Six:

Recontextualisation and Operationalisation in the Regions: *Obshchestvennyi Kontrol'* from Discourse to Action in Samara

This final chapter discusses the recontextualisation and operationalisation of the discourse of civic engagement in governance in my third case study, Samara. To recapitulate, by recontextualisation, I refer to the extent to which national level discourse has been reproduced at the regional level, and by operationalisation, to the practices that are inculcated as a result of this discourse. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, I have chosen Samara as a point of contrast to Moscow and St Petersburg because, as the administrative centre of Samara Oblast, the city has a large number of PCBs but at the same time is unequivocally a 'provincial' city. Located in the Volga District of European Russia, approximately 550 miles southeast of Moscow and 100 miles north of the border with Kazakhstan, it is the sixth most populous city in Russia. Yet, while it is likely to have relatively well-developed PCB network as a result of the numerous government bodies in the city, it is less significant for national politics, is home to fewer opposition-minded activists, possesses a lower number of Western organisations, and a lower overall standard of living. It therefore enables a good comparison of the activities of PCBs in conditions that are less likely to foster public-spiritedness. Such a comparison raises the question of how far practices inside PCBs are shaped by cosmopolitanism and relative wealth. However, as noted in the previous chapter, Russian regions are extremely diverse; it would therefore be short-sighted to assume that Samara is representative of civic participation in governance in all Russia's regions. Instead, this chapter is intended to present just one example of regional practices and to act as a point of contrast to practices in Russia's political centre.

This chapter follows the same structure as the previous one: I first discuss Samara's local regime, in order to give some socio-political context; second, I examine the discourse of civic participation in governance articulated by Samara's governor, Nikolai Merkushkin; and, third, I review experiences of local PCBs recounted to me in 10 interviews with city activists. I show that the governor's enthusiastic rearticulation of federal level discourse attempts both to present himself as Putin's faithful envoy and to distinguish himself from his corrupt and incompetent predecessor, who showed little regard for the views of the Samara public. His

presentation of PCBs as the central component of local governance also correlates with the more positive views regarding these bodies articulated in my interviews. Specifically, his enthusiasm for civic involvement in scrutiny of the local budget has resulted in practices perceived by many respondents to be highly successful. Overall, the practices relayed to me in interviews have a higher (though not absolute) level of correspondence to the discourse articulated by the governor; more citizens are enthusiastic about their role as assistants to the state than in Moscow and St Petersburg, with two respondents wholeheartedly supporting the PCB project. The smaller gap between the governor's discourse and citizens' practices suggests that there is a greater degree of authoritarianism in Samara than in Moscow and St Petersburg as there is a greater level of state control over PCB activities and consequently a lower level of pluralism in governance.

Local Regime

Samara has always been a regional city with relatively little import for national politics, compared to my other case studies. Its location at the confluence of the Volga and Samara rivers attracted pirates, merchants and state warships during the Middle Ages, and fostered a diverse, multi-ethnic population. It became part of the Russian Empire during the sixteenth century after Moscow acquired the Kazan and Astrakhan khanates, and its fertile lands attracted many migrants not only from across Asia but also from Europe, with Jews, Muslims and Christians living side by side.¹ Those people who became known as Volga Germans migrated to the region after a call by Tsaritsa Catherine II, herself a native German. Tomila Lankina has shown how such European settlers used their connections to their native countries in order to 'curb the imperial authorities' interference with their promised self-government.² This served to promote a culture of tolerance and quell repressive tendencies in the region.

Samara Oblast has long been a centre for industry and agriculture in Russia, possessing a high level of peasants and farmers and a comparatively lower level of cultural figures and intellectuals.³ By the 19th Century, it had become the country's

¹ R. Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, pp. 14.

² T. Lankina, 'Regional Democracy Variations and the Forgotten Legacies of Western Engagement' in Gel'man and Ross (eds.), *The Politics of Sub-National Authoritarianism in Russia*, pp. 44.

³ T. Ustinova and I. Rogozhina, 'Russkiye Pisateli v Samare i Samarskoi Gubernii', *Literaturnaya*

top producer of grain, as well as an important centre for animal produce. As such, Samara Oblast made its name as one of the most important economic centres in the Russian regions, with good connections to Moscow.⁴ The standard of living and overall educational levels, therefore, while lower than in the two centres, were nonetheless higher than in other provinces. This demographic, with a large proportion of wealthier peasants, was to make Samara province susceptible to radical political trends. Indeed, Samara was one of the centres of non-Tsarist opposition to the Bolsheviks: after Moscow, Samara was the country's main stronghold for the anarchist movement after the 1905 Revolution. In fact, the Samara Anarchist Federation led the city in a major uprising against the Bolsheviks in May 1918.⁵ In addition, the People's Army of Komuch, an anti-Bolshevik army, found substantial support among the broadly Socialist Revolutionary peasant population and controlled the region for much of the Civil War.⁶

By the end of 1918, however, the Bolsheviks had consolidated power in the area. Due to the high dependence on agriculture, the population was hit particularly hard by the triple deadly processes of famine, collectivisation and dekulakization that characterised the 1920s.⁷ In 1935, Samara was re-named Kuibyshev after the eponymous Bolshevik, who had become president of the local soviet during the Revolution and had overseen the defeat of the opposition. In 1941, faced with a rapidly advancing Nazi invasion, sections of the Russian government were evacuated to the city from Moscow and a bunker was dug there for Stalin, although it was never used. After the war, Kuibyshev became a centre for space rocket construction and hosted the country's missile defence shield, thus becoming a closed city, with no access to foreign news or produce. During this time, every third family worked in armaments for the space programme.⁸ Kuibyshev remained closed until 1991, at which point it was also given back its historical name.

Guberniya: Mezhdunarodnyi Al'manakh, <http://samaralit.ru/?p=10313> (accessed 14 May 2013).

⁴ Ministry of Economic Development, Investment and Trade of the Samara Region, The Samara Region, <http://www.economy.samregion.ru/en/region/> (accessed 13 May 2013).

⁵ N. Heath, 'The Anarchist and Maximalist Uprising in Samara 1918', *Libcom.org*, 2 July 2010, <http://libcom.org/history/anarchist-maximalist-uprising-samara-1918> (accessed 14 May 2013).

⁶ E. Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2007), pp. 64.

⁷ See S. Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivisation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁸ C. Cecil, 'Greed, Corruption and Impotence: Samara Battles for its Architecture', *openDemocracy*, 24 September 2010, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/clementine-cecil/greed-corruption-andimpotence> (accessed 1 May 2013).

Economist Konstantin Titov was voted head of the Kuibyshev City Council of People's Deputies in the first relatively free elections on 4th March 1990 and soon became its chairman. He quickly aligned himself with market reformers Viktor Chernomyrdin and Yegor Gaidar, publically supporting Boris Yeltsin in the wake of the 1991 putsch.⁹ In August 1993, he was appointed head of Samara Oblast administration, becoming known as one of the few 'relatively democratic' regional leaders.¹⁰ Titov changed his political colours frequently during his career: a member of the liberal party *Nash Dom Rossiya*, later *Soyuz Pravykh Sil* and, as was the case with many regional governors, only joined United Russia in 2005 as the political mood in the country changed.¹¹ However, his comparatively liberal leanings did not stop him retaining his seat at the top of the regional administration: in 1996, he was elected to the post of governor of Samara Oblast, winning 63.4% of the vote,¹² a position in which he remained until he took voluntary retirement in 2007.

In 2005, President Putin abolished regional gubernatorial elections, and two years later Vladimir Artyakov, former head of Russia's biggest car manufacturer AvtoVAZ, was appointed as Titov's successor. In the five years Artyakov was governor, the Oblast's socio-economic situation deteriorated drastically, moving from the fifth wealthiest region and an Oblast that donated to the federal budget to twenty-seventh and one that received federal hand-outs.¹³ This, in large part, was due to the impact of the 2008 financial crash on the regional economy, which suffered particularly acutely due to its high dependence on manufacturing, but it was certainly not helped by Artyakov's nebulous political practices.¹⁴ He was implicated in numerous corruption scandals, including allegations of 1.5 billion rouble bonuses,¹⁵ spending 22.5 million roubles of the Oblast budget on an armoured Mercedes S600 Guard, making it the most expensive vehicle driven by a governor,¹⁶

⁹ 'Titov, Konstantin: Chlen Soveta Federatsii ot Samarskoi Oblasti', *Lenta.ru*, <http://lenta.ru/lib/14170693/> (accessed 13 May 2013).

¹⁰ Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, pp. 256.

¹¹ R. Turovsky in W. Reisinger (ed.), *Russia's Regions and Comparative Subnational Politics* (Oxford: Routledge, 2013), pp. 92.

¹² 'Titov, Konstantin: Chlen Soveta Federatsii ot Samarskoi Oblasti', *Lenta.ru*.

¹³ Interview S9.

¹⁴ D. Kudryashov, 'Voshli v krizis. Promyshlennoye proizvodstvo v Samarskoi Oblasti v 2008 godu vyroslo na 3,7%', *Samru.ru*, 2 March 2009, <http://www.samru.ru/bisnes/news/44430.html> (accessed 13 May 2013).

¹⁵ 'Glava Samarskoi Oblasti ne vernul 1,5 mlrd rublei premial'nykh, poluchennykh vo vremya raboty na "AvtoVAZe", *Newsru.com*, 21 September 2009, <http://www.newsru.com/finance/21sep2009/artakov.html> (accessed 13 May 2013).

¹⁶ Levchenko, A., 'Gubernator Prezidentskogo Klassa', *Gazeta.ru*, 5 December 2009, http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2009/12/05_a_3294847.shtml (accessed 13 May 2013).

and was complicit in a bribery scandal involving IKEA,¹⁷ to name but a few of the headlines. His relationship to Samara NGO community was equally bleak: he did not engage with non-governmental groups and either ignored or closed PCBs.¹⁸ Overall, Vladimir Artyakov was rated lowest out of all regional governors in the Federation in terms of transparency.¹⁹

The current governor, in the post since May 2012, is Nikolai Merkushkin, former head of the neighbouring Republic of Mordovia. This choice surprised all corners: until then, not a single governor had been moved from one region to another and, according to head of liberal party Yabloko, signalled deep divisions within the Oblast elite.²⁰ However, at the time of my fieldwork during the summer and autumn of 2012, there was a generally optimistic consensus regarding Merkushkin's potential to deal with some of the key social problems facing Samara: Saransk, capital of Mordovia is cleaner, with fewer potholes and better functioning public services.²¹

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ability to provide public services and implement social projects in Samara has been constrained by administrative tension between the Oblast and the municipal authorities (a problem common to many Russian regions).²² This conflict has advanced and receded depending on the personal characteristics of the incumbents, reaching a peak in 2004 when the office of Mayor Grigorii Limanskii was reshuffled by the Governor in order to weaken his authority.²³ Between October 2006 and October 2010, Just Russia member Viktor Tarkhov (the only regional Mayor not from United Russia) held the post; he was well known as a criminal businessman²⁴ and was eventually forced to quit after

¹⁷ J. Heath, 'IKEA in Russia: 'Now "Everything is Possible"... For a Price, *openDemocracy*, 22 February 2010, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/jesse-heath/ikea-in-russia-now-everything-is-possible-for-price> (accessed 18 April 2013).

¹⁸ Interview S1.

¹⁹ O. Aleksandrov, '"Shkala" Artyakova?', *The Moscow News*, 24 April 2012, http://www.moscow-post.ru/politics/shkala_artjakova8956/ (accessed 18 April 2013).

²⁰ O. Popova, 'Fenomen Merkushkina', *Zasekin.ru*, 14 May 2012, <http://zasekin.ru/politika/2012/05/14/fenomenmerkushk/> (accessed 13 May 2013).

²¹ Popova, 'Fenomen Merkushkina'; Interview S9.

²² See, for instance, Y. Kravtsova, 'Tomsk Mayor Quits amid Conflicts with Governor', *The Moscow Times*, 22 July 2013, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/tomsk-mayor-quits-amid-conflict-with-governor/483450.html> (accessed 14 July 2014).

²³ Interview S4.

²⁴ A. Bratersky, 'United Russia Set to Win in Samara', *St Petersburg Times*, 10 October 2010, http://sptimes.ru/index.php?action_id=2&story_id=32677 (accessed 14 May 2013); R. Moore, 'Samara: The Disappearing Wooden City on the Volga', *The Observer*, 24 October 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2010/oct/24/samara-wooden-city-architecture-review> (accessed 13 May 2013).

the IKEA scandal.²⁵ The current mayor, United Russia member and Tarkhov's former deputy, Dmitry Azarov, has been in the post since October 2010 and had maintained a favourable relationship with Artyakov. However, with Merkushev's appointment to the post, relations between the two power loci deteriorated rapidly, with the activities of the mayor curtailed by the bad relationship with the governor.²⁶

Today, Samara Oblast is one of the most urbanized and industrial regions of Russia, home to 2.2% of the country's population, over 380 oilfields and major car and space rocket manufacturing plants.²⁷ However, despite the high levels of industry in the region, quality of life in Samara is much lower than in Moscow and St Petersburg: even the authorities have recognised that the region suffers from 'chronic problems'.²⁸ The city itself is in bad repair: its historic buildings are in a state of collapse, a plethora of sprawling malls have sprung up outside the city centre, and there are few well-maintained public spaces and amenities.²⁹ One of the country's opposition leaders, Boris Nemtsov, during a recent visit to the city, expressed shock: 'What's happening here? Has the city been carpet bombed?'³⁰ Similarly, Valentina Matviyenko has called it 'dirty and unkempt'.³¹ Problems relating to the environment are widely viewed as serious concerns in the region, with poor air and road quality topping the list.³² Living in such conditions takes its toll on the populace: the number of drug abusers in the region also stands at twice the national average.³³ According to the most recent statistics, 77.7% of Samara residents do not want to take part in civic initiatives, and the Oblast Public Chamber concedes

²⁵ Heath, 'IKEA in Russia', *openDemocracy*.

²⁶ Interview S4.

²⁷ Interview S4.

²⁸ Obshchestvennaya Palata Samarskoi Oblasti, 'Yezhegodnyi Doklad Obshchestvennoi Palaty Samarskoi Oblasti: Sostoyaniye grazhdanskogo obshchestva v Samarskoi Oblasti v 2012', Samara 2012, pp. 3.

²⁹ Moore, 'Samara: The Disappearing Wooden City on the Volga'.

³⁰ Ye. Vabina, 'Boris Nemtsov: "Ya v shoke ot sostoyaniya Samary"', *Zasekin.ru*, 10 April 2013, <http://zasekin.ru/politika/2013/04/10/boris-nemczov-y/> (accessed 18 April 2013).

³¹ Ye. V'yushkova, 'Nashi Otnosheniya s gubernatorom mogut tol'ko uluchat'sya, khuzhe uzhe byt' ne moglo', *Kommersant Samara*, 9 November 2012, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2062985> (accessed 14 May 2013).

³² Obshchestvennaya Palata Samarskoi Oblasti, 'Yezhegodnyi Doklad Obshchestvennoi Palaty Samarskoi Oblasti: Sostoyaniye grazhdanskogo obshchestva v Samarskoi Oblasti v 2012', Samara 2012, pp. 9.

³³ Obshchestvennaya Palata Samarskoi Oblasti, 'Yezhegodnyi Doklad Obshchestvennoi Palaty Samarskoi Oblasti: Sostoyaniye grazhdanskogo obshchestva v Samarskoi Oblasti v 2012', Samara 2012, pp. 35.

that attempts to engage them have failed.³⁴ Furthermore, lending credence to the resource curse theory,³⁵ the region has become blighted by corruption, and the wealth created by the numerous factories and plants in the region has not trickled into the hands of the regular citizen.³⁶ The average wage now stands at just over 8,500USD per annum,³⁷ 2,500 lower than the national average.³⁸ Overall, it is 20th in the country in terms of human development.³⁹ Nonetheless, it is relatively well placed nationally in terms of GDP, rating fifteenth out of Russia's eighty-three federal constituencies, but sinks to twenty-sixth place in GDP per capita.⁴⁰

This discussion has highlighted some of the factors likely to shape both the discourse and the practices of civic participation in governance in Samara Oblast. Like Sobyenin, Nikolai Merkushkin has the difficult tasks of regaining public trust in regional government and improving the standard of living in the wake of Artyakov's legacies of corruption and disinterest. It is thus reasonable to expect a relatively strong focus on civic engagement in the new governor's discourse. On the other hand, the status of Samara as a regional city, the lower levels of income and quality of life, compared to the other case studies and the reports of a disinterested citizenry by the regional Public Chamber lead one to suppose that practices of civic participation in governance are less likely to be operationalised in a critical fashion.

Rearticulation

In this section, I examine the discourse on civic engagement in governance as articulated by Samara Oblast's current governor, Nikolai Merkushkin, in the 11 interviews and public addresses dated between 7 August 2012 and 5 June 2014

³⁴ Obshchestvennaya Palata Samarskoi Oblasti, 'Yezhegodnyi Doklad Obshchestvennoi Palaty Samarskoi Oblasti: Sostoyaniye grazhdanskogo obshchestva v Samarskoi Oblasti v 2012', Samara 2012, pp. 78.

³⁵ See, for instance, M. Humphreys, J. Sachs and J. Stiglitz (eds), *Escaping the Resource Curse* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2007).

³⁶ Obshchestvennaya Palata Samarskoi Oblasti, 'Yezhegodnyi Doklad Obshchestvennoi Palaty Samarskoi Oblasti: Sostoyaniye grazhdanskogo obshchestva v Samarskoi Oblasti v 2012', Samara 2012, pp. 3.

³⁷ Yu. Bondareva, 'Srednyaya zarplata v Samarskoi Oblasti v oktyabrya sostavila 22,5 tysyach rublei', *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, 2 November 2012, <http://spb.hh.ru/article.xml?articleId=12224> (accessed 17 April 2013).

³⁸ 'Srednyaya zarplata v Rossii vyrastyot do 28,8 tyshyach', *RBK*, 2 October 2012, <http://top.rbc.ru/economics/02/10/2012/672412.shtml> (accessed 17 April 2013).

³⁹ A. Auzan and S. Bobylev, *National Human Development Report for the Russian Federation*, pp. 138.

⁴⁰ RIA Rating, *Reiting Sotsial'no-Ekonomisticheskogo Polozheniya Subyektov RF: Itogi 2011 Goda*, (Moscow, 2012).

listed on the website of the Samara Oblast government.⁴¹ I show that, of the three regional leaders, Merkushkin presents himself most faithfully both as a servant of the Oblast's residents and as an envoy of Putin. The mechanisms for civic participation discussed below are direct reproductions of the central discourse, and are based on the notion of the active citizen assisting the authorities to fulfil tasks determined by the regional (and hence by the central) authorities.

Merkushkin emphasises in the majority of the texts the importance of feedback between the authorities and citizens and states that everyone must work together in order to resolve the region's numerous problems. The most likely reason for this is that the previous governor had proven both very unpopular with residents and inept at managing the regional economic situation. Thus, one of the most pressing tasks for the new governor was to restore citizens' faith in the government by presenting himself as an engaged and sincere politician and by improving the population's living standards. Consequently, alongside statements on improving the region's industrial and agricultural output, building new roads and other social amenities, preparing for the 2018 World Cup (of which Samara is a host region), the standard of living in his previous constituency, Mordovia, much space is devoted to stating the importance of local government and exhorting citizens to work together.

The self-presentation of Merkushkin as Putin's regional ambassador occurs through numerous references to Putin throughout his interviews and addresses, in which he frequently justifies policy ideas with quotations from the President. A prominent United Russia member, the Samara governor presents himself as operating on a clear Presidential mandate:

I went to Samara on the instructions of the President to solve a range of problems and I am solving them. It's my job.⁴²

⁴¹ See 'Publikatsii', *Pravitel'stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial'nyi Sait*, http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications (accessed 20 June 2014). Although there are a total of 18 texts, seven are articles by journalists who represent Merkushkin's views in the third person and since I am interested in the way he articulates this discourse in his own words, I have discarded these. While the number of articles analysed in this section is substantially fewer than those in earlier sections, the Samara governor talks at greater length on governance and the role of the citizen than his colleagues in Moscow and St Petersburg; thus, there is sufficient material to build a comparable picture of his conceptualisations.

⁴² 'Nikolai Merkushkin: "Samoye glavnoye – mirovozzreniye lyudei menyayetsya", *Pravitel'stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial'nyi Sait*, 3 June 2013, http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/18.06.2014/skip/2/51894/ (accessed 18 June 2014).

Similarly, his pronouncements on mechanisms for civic engagement, as well as on other governance mechanisms, are often direct reproductions of Kremlin policies. For instance, Merkushev is the only regional leader to mention specific policies of the third wave of administrative reforms, such as co-operation among government departments and 'multi-function' centres where citizens can access a range of government services.⁴³ He also states that Samara has been nationally recognised for successfully implementing the President's 'May Decrees' (*Maitskiye Ukazy*), thus insinuating that governance in the region is the epitome of the national agenda.⁴⁴

Merkushkin's legitimating narrative for increased civic engagement in governance is Samara's many social problems. Similar to the presentation of the 'global race' by Putin and Sobyanin, he uses the socio-economic situation in the Oblast to stress the need for unity among the authorities, political parties and NGOs and to call for the participation and assistance of active citizens. In both end-of-year addresses, he paints a dark picture of life in the region, starting his speeches with a list of problems before setting out his strategies for their resolution: 'Yes, we have many problems. There are many more and they are much deeper than I had imagined when I took office.'⁴⁵ In his first address as governor, he lists numerous bleak statistics to illustrate the governance challenges that lie ahead. He states that the region's economic status has fallen from the top five to the 'second or third dozen' nationally, with 'not only businesses but entire industries' moving out of the region. He cites high levels of drug addiction and the fact that the number of people infected with the AIDS virus is more than twice the national average: 'it is hard even to imagine: every seventieth person is infected with this terrible disease.' He continues with the 'tragic' fact that in 2011 the number of people leaving the region

⁴³ 'Poslaniye Gubernatora Nikolaya Merkusheva k deputatam Samarskoi Gubernskoi Dumy i vsem zhitelem regiona', *Pravitel'stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial'nyi Sait*, 26 December 2012, http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/22.06.2014/skip/3/48357/ (accessed 22 June 2014).

⁴⁴ 'Poslaniye Gubernatora Nikolaya Merkusheva k deputatam Samarskoi Gubernskoi Dumy i vsem zhitelem regiona', *Pravitel'stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial'nyi Sait*, 26 December 2013, http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/18.06.2014/skip/3/58757/ (accessed 20 June 2014). The May Decrees were a set of social and economic legislative acts that aimed to continue Russia's modernization programme begun by Medvedev. See Adelaja, T., 'Vladimir Putin aims to Russia's investment climate', *The Telegraph*, 15 June 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sponsored/rbth/business/9333604/vladimir-putin-russia-investment.html> (accessed 16 August 2014).

⁴⁵ 'Stennogramma press-konferentsii Gubernatora Samarskoi Oblasti N.I. Merkusheva (3.10.12)', *Pravitel'stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial'nyi Sait*, http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/19.06.2014/skip/3/204/ (accessed 19 June 2014).

exceeded the number of people moving there. Having sketched his assessment of the challenges and, admitting that 'not everyone will like what I have just said', he calls upon everyone to 'radically reconsider' their attitudes to the situation and work together to improve the region.⁴⁶ Two main strategies are presented: citizens should become active and state and society should unite. I now discuss each in turn.

The idea of the active citizen is developed in the governor's second address and features strongly in the majority of articles on the website. If citizens become more active and assist the authorities in the execution of their plans, the region's economic downturn could be reversed. This is also Vladimir Putin's argument, discussed in Chapter Three, and Merkushkin duly credits the premier:

In his address, Russian President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin said the main reason for the slowdown of development lies inside the country, within ourselves. This is doubly true for the Samara region. It means that the dynamics of development can only be instilled from within. Many people need to change their attitude. We must once and for all say goodbye to complacency, to the habit of living better than we work, to the irrepressible desire for easy, in fact for unearned, money, which is very typical for our region. Work and work alone, honest and fairly paid, will lead us to success and prosperity.⁴⁷

In other words, the concept of 'active citizens' is presented as a panacea for the region's (and the country's) problems. This locates the solution inside citizens themselves and thereby absolves the authorities from responsibility for bad decisions and poor governance; it depoliticises the social problems. The idea that people should wean themselves off their perceived reliance on the Soviet-era state and take greater responsibility for themselves also appears frequently in the federal-level discourse and has been directly rearticulated here.

⁴⁶ 'Poslaniye Gubernatora Nikolaya Merkushkina k deputatam Samarskoi Gubernskoi Dumy i vsem zhitel'm regiona', *Pravitel'stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial'nyi Sait*, 30 December 2012, http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/21.06.2014/skip/3/48357/ (accessed 21 June 2014).

⁴⁷ 'Poslaniye Gubernatora Nikolaya Merkushkina k deputatam Samarskoi Gubernskoi Dumy i vsem zhitel'm regiona', *Pravitel'stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial'nyi Sait*, 26 December 2013, http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/18.06.2014/skip/3/58757/ (accessed 20 June 2014).

However, Merkushkin depicts a very limited role in governance for active citizens: numerous representations of the authorities as decision-makers who need to communicate their governance agenda more effectively suggests that the public are to be active only insofar as they carry out the authorities' decisions. In an interview with a newspaper in the town of Togliatti, the Governor calls for the need to establish 'constructive cooperation' between the authorities, NGOs, political parties and citizens in order to implement the authorities' plans. Such a consensus, he states,

Will be good, especially for the residents of Togliatti, who need to understand what the authorities do and, most importantly, to see our actions and realise that everything that happens in the city depends on active citizens.⁴⁸

In other words, Togliatti citizens must become active in comprehending the authorities' decisions and assisting them in their execution. Similarly, in an article discussing the forthcoming local elections, Merkushkin states,

But without the active participation of the residents themselves, without their active citizenship, you can't create order. The authorities should be the engine of these processes.⁴⁹

The use of the word 'order' (*poryadok*) implies a structured arrangement imposed from above, and seems in contrast to the idea of civic engagement as helping to shape public policy. Like the role of citizens in the federal-level discourse, it suggests that citizens assist the authorities in the implementation of pre-determined goals. Merkushkin's stipulation that the authorities should take the lead also reinforces citizens' subordinate relationship and is further articulated in his annual address:

⁴⁸ 'Nikolai Merkushkin: "Togliatti ne dolzhen zadykhat'sya v probkakh i v starykh skhemakh upravleniya"' *Pravitel'stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial'nyi Sait*, 4 June 2013, http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/18.06.2014/skip/2/51900/ (accessed 21 June 2014).

⁴⁹ 'Nikolai Merkushkin: "Lyudi dolzhny sami formulirovat' svoyu vlast"' *Pravitel'stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial'nyi Sait*, 2 September 2013, http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/18.06.2014/skip/2/55087/ (accessed 21 June 2014).

Our common goal, both for the ministries and local government, is to do everything to make our people comprehend, realize, understand what the government wants, what it does and what part people can play in this can play in this themselves. And if we can form a single, close-knit society within 2-3 years, we will definitely be competitive, we will definitely beat many others, we will definitely succeed.⁵⁰

The use of three synonyms highlights the importance of enlightening the citizens as to the governance agenda: it is thus the government's job to make citizens understand what it wants, not the government's job to understand what citizens want. Further, the importance of demystifying government activities is linked to the idea that state and society can unite to overcome their problems. The idea of a 'single close-knit society' does not suggest that either political contestation or a diversity of social agendas will be tolerated by the regional authorities in the formation of public policy. Furthermore, this image recalls the paternalistic relationship between the state and the population typical of Soviet-era governance discussed in Chapter Three. It is ironic that the governor calls for an end to the Soviet mentality when the relationship advocated in his discourse recalls the Soviet conception.

Linked to this is the second strategy for improving life in the Oblast: the idea of unity between citizens and the authorities. Unity is an important aspect in the governor's portrayal of civic participation and was also a key ideological component in Putin's construction of state-society relations, as well as in the Soviet discourse. Thus, while Merkushev promotes the individualisation of responsibility for overcoming the Oblast's problems through the concept of active citizens, his use of the concept of unity suggests that citizens may take an individual approach only insofar as it coincides with the approach of the authorities. This emphasis on unity appears frequently in his 2013 address, in which he states that the task of turning the oblast around is 'unique in its dimensions, difficulty and historical significance'

⁵⁰ 'Poslaniye Gubernatora Nikolaya Merkusheva k deputatam Samarskoi Gubernskoi Dumy i vsem zhitel'm regiona', *Pravitel'stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial'nyi Sait*, 26 December 2013, http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/18.06.2014/skip/3/58757/ (accessed 20 June 2014).

and that it can only be resolved by ‘thinking and acting as one whole, as a single team’. Later on in the same speech, he states that the unity of society and government is ‘of great importance.’⁵¹ The idea that society is comprised of numerous competing and often contradictory interests is totally absent from the governor’s discourse. Unsurprisingly, then, civil society is also portrayed as an assistant to the authorities: ‘Local authorities and civil society must work in the same team. We must learn to listen to each other, and if we work as a team, we will solve our problems.’⁵² This also suggests that critical or politicised groups do not have a role to play in Merkushev’s vision of governance (and this is borne out in my interviews, discussed below). The idea of unity depoliticises relations between the authorities and citizens, recalls the unity of state and society typical of Soviet times and excludes the possibility that there may be alternative paths of development. I now turn to the presentation of specific policies intended to encourage civic participation.

The governor mentions numerous policies to operationalise the agenda of fostering active citizens and creating unity between society and the authorities, the most frequently occurring and extensively elaborated of which is devolution of powers to local government. This is common across all leaders examined in this thesis; however, Merkushev’s proposals are by far the most radical. He frequently attests to his commitment to the principles of decentralisation by recalling that the first Russian *zemstvo* was founded in Samara,⁵³ stating that he is an active supporter of decentralisation,⁵⁴ and calling centralised government ‘yesterday’s programme’.⁵⁵ He devotes an entire interview to local government reform, in which

⁵¹ ‘Poslaniye Gubernatora Nikolaya Merkusheva k deputatam Samarskoi Gubernskoi Dumy i vsem zhitelem regiona’, *Pravitel’stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial’nyi Sait*, 26 December 2013, http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/18.06.2014/skip/3/58757/ (accessed 20 June 2014).

⁵² ‘Nikolai Merkushev: “Liudi dolzhny sami formulirovat’ svoyu vlast’”’ *Pravitel’stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial’nyi Sait*, 2 September 2013, http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/18.06.2014/skip/2/55087/ (accessed 21 June 2014).

⁵³ ‘Stennogramma press-konferentsii Gubernatora Samarskoi Oblasti N.I. Merkusheva (3.10.12)’, *Pravitel’stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial’nyi Sait*, http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/19.06.2014/skip/3/204/ (accessed 19 June 2014).

⁵⁴ ‘Nikolai Merkushev: “Sistema MSU vzobralas’ na samykh verkh, a iz vertikal’i upravleniya vypala’’, *Pravitel’stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial’nyi Sait*, 17 February 2014 http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/18.06.2014/skip/1/59859/ (accessed 19 June 2014).

⁵⁵ ‘Stennogramma press-konferentsii Gubernatora Samarskoi Oblasti N.I. Merkusheva (3.10.12)’, *Pravitel’stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial’nyi Sait*,

he calls for a depoliticised (i.e. non-party) system of local government bodies that would function much as public councils currently do, with city dumas comprising candidates representing local districts or NGOs, but not political parties. According to Merkushkin, this is a standard conceptualisation of local government: 'Throughout the world the system of local government is not politicised.' It is also presented as Putin's recommended policy, as well as the norm around the world (and thereby irrefutable):

That is what the President said in his message – we have to bring local government closer to the people so that is within arm's reach, so to speak. This is the global ideology of local government.⁵⁶

According to the governor, local communities should be handed responsibilities relating to utilities, improving the local area, monitoring the implementation of state programmes. Through this, people can become active, their children will grow up in active environments and will later become active themselves. It is clear that this proposal is intended to actualise the kind of depoliticised, unified community advocated in his general statements, in which the distinction between society and the state is no longer relevant.

The two other policies that recur in the governor's discourse are the development of public councils and the devolution of budget responsibility to local communities, both of which support his local government agenda. First, public councils are presented as a sort of revolution in governance, which can help increase the number of active citizens in service of the authorities. Of the three regional leaders, Merkushkin is the most ardent supporter of these bodies and presents them as a central component to the extension and depoliticisation of local government. For instance, he states,

We already have a new form of government – district public councils. We have seen this in Togliatti; I saw it in

http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/19.06.2014/skip/3/204/ (accessed 19 June 2014).

⁵⁶Nikolai Merkushkin: "Sistema MSU vzobralas' na samykh verkh, a iz vertikal'nykh upravleniya vypala", *Pravitel'stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial'nyi Sait*, 17 February 2014

http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/18.06.2014/skip/1/59859/ (accessed 19 June 2014).

Novokuybishevsk. They work in the neighbourhoods, creating district associations that take up issues such as improving the local area, housing problems, non-payment of rent. This is a good beginning, and we need to do our best to support it, including financially.⁵⁷

His description of them is strikingly similar to his ideas on local government reform discussed above; it would thus seem that his intention is to expand the network of PCBs so that it replaces representation by political parties altogether. He speaks proudly of Samara Oblast Public Chamber, which he claims 'is not only the largest in composition, but also one of the most active in the country.'⁵⁸ Similarly, responsibility for increasing local budgets has been devolved from the regional administration to local communities. He states that grants now are given on the basis of 'socio-economic indicators'⁵⁹, though he does not elaborate on this concept. Elsewhere he states,

Municipalities, from rural communities to major cities, must move away from a psychology of dependency and work actively to increase the revenues of their own local budgets.⁶⁰

Thus, the mechanisms for civic participation promoted in the governor's discourse is an archetype of authoritarian neoliberal governance, calling on one had for active citizens to help increase budget revenue, but on the other a depoliticised system of councils that can be managed from above.

⁵⁷ 'Poslaniye Gubernatora Nikolaya Merkushkina k deputatam Samarskoi Gubernskoi Dumy i vsem zhitel'm regiona', *Pravitel'stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial'nyi Sait*, 26 December 2013, http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/18.06.2014/skip/3/58757/ (accessed 20 June 2014).

⁵⁸ 'Stennogramma press-konferentsii Gubernatora Samarskoi Oblasti N.I. Merkushkina (3.10.12)', *Pravitel'stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial'nyi Sait*, http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/19.06.2014/skip/3/204/ (accessed 19 June 2014).

⁵⁹ 'Poslaniye Gubernatora Nikolaya Merkushkina k deputatam Samarskoi Gubernskoi Dumy i vsem zhitel'm regiona', *Pravitel'stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial'nyi Sait*, 26 December 2013, http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/18.06.2014/skip/3/58757/ (accessed 20 June 2014).

⁶⁰ 'Nikolai Merkushkin: "Sistema MSU vzobralas" na samykh verkh, a iz vertikal'i upravleniya vypala', *Pravitel'stvo Samarskoi Oblasti: Ofitsial'nyi Sait*, 17 February 2014 http://www.samregion.ru/press_center/publications/18.06.2014/skip/1/59859/ (accessed 19 June 2014).

To conclude this section, Merkuskhin's discourse of civic engagement is based on two principles: active citizens and unity between citizens and the authorities. These principles are manifested in concrete policies such as devolution of certain apolitical powers to local communities and the expansion of the PCB network. His presentation of local government reform, in which he suggests replacing competition among political parties with the public council system in particular highlights the intended operationalization of these two principles. These policies also straightforwardly rearticulate the Kremlin-level discourse, which also advocate active citizens in service of the state. His enthusiastic promotion of the public council system suggests that their operationalization is likely to be both active and orthodox.

Operationalisation

In this section, I explore the discourse of civic participation in governance articulated by 10 PCB members in Samara. As capital of the Oblast, Samara hosts both regional and municipal government structures and consequently there are many PCBs in the city. The majority of respondents were members of several consultative structures at once and often confused the names of the various bodies during the interviews, thus giving the impression that the city's PCB network is tangled and incoherent. In contrast to Moscow and St Petersburg, Samara respondents displayed a wider range of views regarding the utility of PCBs, with two staunch supporters of the idea and several relatively uncritical reformers, alongside the familiar, harsher criticisms previously articulated in the other case study cities, including three abolitionists.

Most respondents felt that levels of civic participation in the region are low due to the scarce numbers of activists and the high degree of control from the federal centre, factors which could also contribute to the increased overall support for PCBs among my respondents. However, unlike their Moscow and St Petersburg counterparts, the only people to voice oppositional political viewpoints were the abolitionists; the remaining respondents felt that the cause of PCBs' inadequacies lay with the lack of competent citizens rather than disinterested government officials. Yet, while this overall more conservative understanding of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* has led to less confrontational practices within many PCBs and to the co-optation of civic initiatives by the authorities, socially beneficial collaboration occurs in the

field of public budget hearings, an initiative also supported by the governor. As with other examples discussed above, it shows that positive collaboration is possible when there is support from the authorities. This section is split into three parts: first, I discuss respondents' perceptions of Samara's regional specificities; second, I examine their attitudes towards PCBs; third, I show how these attitudes are operationalised in two contrasting case study PCBs, Samara city Public Council and Samara Public Budget Experts.

There was a strong sense of regional identity among my respondents, with the 'regional factor'⁶¹ perceived to play an important role in what many described as dismal relations between the authorities and citizens. This 'regional factor' appeared to comprise two main features. First, several respondents noted a suspicious attitude on the part of the authorities towards independent social activity due to the relatively small number of activists in the region.⁶² One respondent stated that citizens enjoy a greater level of liberty in Moscow because there are many more public-spirited people and a diversity of political views is normal. In Samara, due to the passive nature of the majority of the population, if citizens want to get involved in public life, 'we immediately get into the FSB records, police records...'.⁶³ Another stated that the authorities systematically try to shut down independent or critical social groups by creating 'intolerable conditions' for their members. He claimed that he had been beaten by masked men with baseball bats as a result of his activism.⁶⁴ A third lamented, 'I understand people who [do not speak up]. They just want to live comfortably.'⁶⁵ As such, it was perceived to constitute a great personal risk to speak out against government decisions. The feeling was that civic passivity is sustained by the fact that citizens do not have the opportunities to express their political opinions in public or access the critical views of others, particularly since all media outlets beyond the internet are linked to the government.⁶⁶ Samara citizens were therefore seen to remain disengaged through a fear of the dangers of public activism and a lack of access to alternative viewpoints that could develop political sensibilities.

⁶¹ Interview S8.

⁶² Interview S10, S8.

⁶³ Interview S1.

⁶⁴ Interview S8.

⁶⁵ Interview S2.

⁶⁶ Interview S2, S4, S8.

The second aspect of the 'regional factor' was the inability of Samara citizens to determine social policy themselves. Decisions affecting the area were seen to be made in Moscow, with several respondents noting increasing pressure from the federal centre on regional politics in the last ten years.⁶⁷ The view was that if there is change in Moscow, there will be change in Samara, but neither Samara citizens nor politicians can affect the power vertical in the region. In this context, many respondents bemoaned the cancellation of gubernatorial elections (although they have since been reinstated in limited form) because it meant that the regional leader no longer needed to consider citizens' views in formulating and delivering policy. This was especially apparent in the case of Artyakov, who, according to one respondent, had been a 'very corrupt chap, like all Muscovites... who did a lot of harm for the region.'⁶⁸ Another respondent stated that he was a 'closed' person, who did not need to collaborate with society to solve his problems. Because he was not required to win an election to stay in power, the governor did not consider the population's views in his decision-making and therefore closed or ignored all the PCBs.⁶⁹ A third stated that even if experts developed ten or twenty new modes of collaboration between the authorities and the public, the level of public participation would not increase since 'we do not have elected leaders here, they do not need anything from society.'⁷⁰ One respondent stated that he had pinned 'very great hopes' on the new governor, Merkushkin, because 'we don't have anyone else to pin our hopes on, the last governor destroyed everything.'⁷¹ These two factors combined led to a general feeling of impotence and fatalism among many of my respondents regarding their abilities to effect social change in their municipality or the future of state-society relations more generally and almost certainly perpetuated less confrontational practices inside PCBs.

Two of my ten respondents were unequivocal PCB supporters, both of whom were active both in welfare-providing NGOs, as well as in a large number of PCBs. Both supporters felt that PCB membership was advantageous for their cause and although they showed awareness of the limitations of PCBs, they did not feel that they needed to be reformed in any way. Despite both supporting the PCB concept, the respondents saw very different purposes for PCBs, a fact that highlights the lack

⁶⁷ Interview S1, S4.

⁶⁸ Interview S9.

⁶⁹ Interview S1

⁷⁰ Interview S4.

⁷¹ Interview S9.

of consensus regarding the role these bodies are intended to play in public life, even among their enthusiastic members.

The first respondent, an activist with a disabled persons' charity, revealed a lower expectation of PCBs than some of the more critical respondents; for instance, instead of attempting to influence the city leader, in his view, PCBs should convey information and any problems arising 'from below' to the leadership in a timely manner. He saw them as an aid for the leaders, rather than a tool for citizens. He was also aware of the dependence of PCBs on the authorities, stating that such bodies are likely to be effective when the leader is 'intelligent, purposeful and knowledgeable'. This did not pose a problem for the respondent, since PCBs were created to serve the leader and it was up to him to make use of them. 'If there is a leader, there will be work; if there is no leader, there will be no work', he stated. He recounted numerous times when the authorities had taken his views on board, and stated that his membership in PCBs allowed him 'to actively influence the situation in the city and the region as a whole.' He felt that authorities not only listened to his opinions and recommendations, but also acted upon them, particularly during the public budget hearings, discussed below.⁷² In his view, this was because officials did not want to be told that they did not work well with the public. However, it also suggests that the views and interests of apolitical welfare organisations are more likely to be taken into consideration by authorities than those of critical lobbying or human rights groups.

The second supporter was the founder of an organisation that helps regional welfare-providing NGOs with training and resources, and had been involved in setting up PCBs since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In contrast to the majority of the respondents, she felt that regional authorities had begun to pay more attention to the recommendations of public experts in recent years because they had 'begun to want to understand where the problems lie.' She was aware of the structural problems faced by PCBs, stating that they can only work effectively 'when there is interest on both sides' but stated that in order to improve their competency, the PCB model does not need to be reformed but that there needs to be more 'public experts' able to take part in them. For her, PCBs are necessary because social systems have become so complex that the authorities can no longer single-handedly organise public life or distribute resources effectively. In this environment, citizens

⁷² Interview S3.

contain an important source of skill and resources, which can be accessed through PCBs. Such bodies are important as 'they give another perspective on the problems facing the community and, by consequence, a broader set of solutions.'⁷³ Her view of PCBs was a straightforward rearticulation of the state's discourse, envisaging citizens as important sources of expertise that should be mobilised in welfare and service provision.

The reformers comprised the biggest group among my respondents, with five agreeing that PCBs can be useful but do need to be reformed. Within this group, however, there was a wide spectrum of opinions ranging from the belief that PCBs constitute the 'creation of a civil society'⁷⁴ to the idea that they are a 'tool for manipulating public opinion.'⁷⁵ In contrast to reformers in Moscow and St Petersburg, who saw the problems of 'loyal' PCB members and disinterested authorities as equally problematic for the creation of PCBs as useful discussion sites, respondents in Samara mentioned only the first problem in any detail. This suggests that they did not consider it possible to reform the authorities, perhaps because they felt too far removed from those who decided the region's fate. Instead, their disappointment lay with the kind of people taking up membership in PCBs because they were to various extents affiliated with the authorities, either as former officials or as people with other conflicts of interest. As such, respondents felt that many PCB members did not have the courage to speak out against the authorities. One respondent claimed that often members are afraid even to mention their proposals and ideas for fear of repercussions. Recalling the paucity of social activity in the region, he stated, 'That's why we need people who are relatively independent and are able to speak out publically. There are very few such people in PCBs. This is the problem with public life in Samara in general.'⁷⁶ In order to solve this problem, respondents felt that PCBs should be formed in a more democratic fashion, taking account of the public's views, possibly via elections or internet voting.⁷⁷

Three of my respondents were abolitionists, two of whom ran independent online news publications and one running a local branch of a national oppositional NGO. Two of the three had been members of PCBs, but had either been sacked from the post or had chosen to leave. All three shared the criticisms of the

⁷³ Interview S5.

⁷⁴ Interview S9.

⁷⁵ Interview S6.

⁷⁶ Interview S2.

⁷⁷ Interview S6.

abolitionists in other regions. First, they considered PCBs to be mere window dressing for the government, and that under the current regime, which one respondent described as comprising of 'war criminals', it was impossible to have any genuine collaboration between the authorities and civic organisations.⁷⁸ The second reason was that PCBs prevented the development of more legitimate forms of political participation. According to one respondent, 'If we had direct elections and a transparent voting system, then questions of civic engagement would not be the agenda of the day neither for us, nor for British academics.'⁷⁹ This suggests that abolitionists, regardless of their location, sympathised with the national opposition movement.

Like several other regions, Samara began establishing mechanisms of co-operation between state and non-state institutions significantly earlier than the federal level. The framework for collaboration between social organisations and the authorities was created for Samara Oblast in 2003, while federal legislation on public consultative bodies was adopted only as a result of the administrative reforms of 2006-2008.⁸⁰ Samara's framework set up a legal basis for co-operation with the authorities, including the creation of the Social Assembly of Samara Oblast, the precursor to the regional public chamber, created in 2008.⁸¹ What kind of role did the 2003 framework create for civic participation? Non-governmental organisations were to be involved in the monitoring of regional government activities and the provision of support in carrying out welfare, cultural and environmental activities.⁸² This legislation paved the way for the proliferation of public chambers and public councils in the following years, and inscribed the task of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* of government activities into government bodies themselves.⁸³ However, as discussed above, during the Artyakov years, many PCBs were neglected or co-opted by the authorities. Since it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the trajectories of all bodies during this time, I focus on one such institution created on the back of this framework, the Samara City Public Chamber, whose fate was similar

⁷⁸ Interview S8.

⁷⁹ Interview S4.

⁸⁰ See Chapter Four.

⁸¹ Obshchestvennaya Palata Samarskoi Oblasti, 'Yezhegodnyi Doklad Obshchestvennoi Palaty Samarskoi Oblasti: Sostoyaniye grazhdanskogo obshchestva v Samarskoi Oblasti v 2010', Samara 2010, pp. 37.

⁸² 'Yezhegodnyi Doklad Obshchestvennoi Palaty Samarskoi Oblasti', Samara 2010, pp. 7.

⁸³ Interview S3.

to that of several others⁸⁴ before examining what has been described as a successful collaboration between citizens and authorities in the form of the Public Budget Experts.

According to its website, the Samara City Public Chamber is an 'advisory and consultative body', created with the goal of facilitating collaboration between citizens, NGOs and the authorities.⁸⁵ Its main tasks are to act as a feedback mechanism between citizens and the authorities, carry out public opinion surveys, support civic initiatives, analyse draft bills, perform public scrutiny of government authorities, and to support cultural programmes in the region.⁸⁶ It was initiated by a local Yabloko activist, who felt that the mayor should have greater consultation with the public before making decisions. The activist stated he had believed that a public chamber would be a better form of consultation than referenda or internet voting, first, because both are open to manipulation and, second, because the mayor needed more than just a 'yes-no' input on decisions. He felt that members should comprise people with plenty of experience in public life and expertise in their chosen field, who could argue their point in front of the authorities regardless of whether it coincided with the official line or not.⁸⁷ Furthermore, a public chamber would give weight to the mayor's decisions vis-à-vis the governor, since the relationship between the two was marred by a conflict of interests, with Oblast and city administrative levels are constantly competing for funding. He thought that a public chamber would strengthen the mayor's legitimacy.

However, the Yabloko activist's ambitions for the chamber were not fulfilled as its activities were sharply constrained by the personal qualities of the mayor himself. According to another respondent, while the body was 'more or less competent' for a while, when the occupier of the post of mayor was changed, so did the activities of the Chamber; the new mayor, Tarkhov, was described as 'a Soviet-era person who had no idea about collaboration with society.'⁸⁸ He quickly went on to change the Chamber's membership, removing many of the critical voices. The atmosphere under Tarkhov was such that 'even those remaining from the first

⁸⁴ See interview S5, S1, S2.

⁸⁵ Obshchestvennaya Palata pri gorodskogo okruga Samara, <http://www.opsamara.ru/> (accessed 16 May 2013).

⁸⁶ Obshchestvennaya Palata pri gorodskogo okruga Samara, <http://www.opsamara.ru/> (accessed 16 May 2013).

⁸⁷ Interview S2.

⁸⁸ Interview S4.

composition could not afford to voice an independent viewpoint.⁸⁹ In the eyes of my respondent, the new Chamber comprises 'a lot people who don't want to publically contradict the mayor... but rather resolve their personal problems with unofficial means.'⁹⁰ Because of this, he eventually resigned from the very organisation that he created. According to another respondent, 'Samara city Public Chamber only works when its leader is a sensible, goal-oriented person – the human factor plays a big role.'⁹¹ This discussion shows that although the desire to create platforms for discussion often comes from below and activists initially embrace the PCBs format, such bodies are very easily co-opted into the system of authoritarian neoliberal governance.

Of all the PCBs discussed during my interviews, respondents spoke most positively of the Public Budget Experts. According to one, 'It's the only social structure which works – we really influence the budgetary process and the use of resources.'⁹² The Public Budget Experts are thirteen representatives of different NGOs or public councils who, according to the December 2005 regional law 'On the budget apparatus and budget process in Samara Oblast', are recognised as experts and are legally allowed to monitor the finances of any department in the region.⁹³ They were instituted after the passing of a federal law in 2005, which stipulated public hearings of regional budgets, but did not elaborate on the form they should take.⁹⁴ As such, each region had a relatively free hand in designing the process in their jurisdiction.⁹⁵ In the case of Samara, *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* of the budget took place in two stages: first, a public discussion (*obshchestvennoye obsuzhdeniye*) was held to discuss the planned budget distribution for the coming year and of the fulfilment of the budget of the previous year. Second, a concluding hearing (*itogovoye slushaniye*) took place on the budget for the coming year, as well as the yearly report on the budget of the previous year.⁹⁶ According to my

⁸⁹ Interview S2.

⁹⁰ Interview S2.

⁹¹ Interview S3.

⁹² Interview S3.

⁹³ Sotsial'no-Orientirovannyye Nekommercheskiye Organizatsii Samarskoi Oblasti, Obshchestvennyye Eksperty, http://songo63.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=52 (accessed 18 May 2013).

⁹⁴ Interview S5.

⁹⁵ This is likely to have changed after the passing of the law on *Obshchestvennyi Kontrol'* discussed in Chapter Four.

⁹⁶ Sotsial'no-Orientirovannyye Nekommercheskiye Organizatsii Samarskoi Oblasti, Zakon o budgetnom Ustroistve (Izvlcheniya), <http://songo63.ru/index.php/component/content/article/50> (accessed 18 May 2013).

respondents, the first such hearing attracted between one and two hundred people – a fact which initially surprised the authorities. According to one respondent, various citizens had even prepared presentations which,

Enumerated the share of the budget, spending priorities, they gave their views on whether it was too much or not enough. Money is needed for this, for that... The authorities certainly were very surprised that people were trying to change the budget.⁹⁷

The second public hearing involved the Samara Oblast Public Assembly and a large number of members of the public gave their views. One respondent recalled,

When the Minister saw and heard all this, he said, "Why did no one told us that people are interested? We would have done the report differently." I replied, "How can we tell you? Who should have told you and how? For people to be able to tell you something you need to have a Public Council and through that we tell you what we expect and we want." And there and then we began the process of creating the public council. A year and a half later we were there ...

Again, although there was a legal impetus for starting public scrutiny of the budget, a significant drive also came from 'below'. Citizens saw public councils as a legitimate mechanism through which to become involved in governance.

Public Budget Experts view themselves as having considerable influence on the budget. Although recommendations worked out during hearings and round tables are not always acted upon, ministers and Public Experts discuss the budget in detail at round tables and seminars, which are also attended by journalists who publicise the findings and the resolutions. This means, according to one member, that 'there is transparency; people can demand their rights.'⁹⁸ According to one respondent, there have been three incidences in which the experts' alterations to the budget have been accepted in full or in part.⁹⁹ Another member recalled how the

⁹⁷ Interview S5.

⁹⁸ Interview S9.

⁹⁹ Interview S5.

public scrutiny of the budget revealed that millions of roubles of public money was being spent illegally on the restoration and building of local churches. Despite this discovery, it was not taken up by the regions courts: 'the prosecutor should get involved but it has been silent for 3 years – closes its eyes, pretends it doesn't know anything.'¹⁰⁰ While this does not suggest a high level of influence, the enthusiasm for the body displayed by its members suggests that its importance for citizens lies in the process, rather than the result. Why is *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* of the budget considered more effective than other PCBs? First, the budget is a concrete sum of money that is relatively straightforward to monitor, rather than the generic activities of various government bodies; it is easier to point out discrepancies on spreadsheets than to influence an official with argumentation. Second, the forms of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* are structured and delineated, with clear avenues for participation and roles for the public. Third, it is an area in which the governor has encouraged public involvement.

Overall, in Samara, most respondents were relatively positive about PCBs, seeing them as an opportunity to present their views and campaigns to the authorities. If they needed reforming, it was to increase the amount of active citizens, not to reconfigure their relationship to the authorities. Those with negative views belonged to the opposition and considered themselves marginal in Samara's public life. The different trajectories of the PCBs discussed above show that the Chamber founded by the opposition activist failed to enact *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* while the Public Budget Experts were supported by the government.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined Samara's local regime, the discourse of civic engagement articulated by the governor and the social practices produced through PCBs in the city in order to understand how far the social practices conform to the discourse. With both the governor and most respondents supporting PCBs, the gap between rhetoric and reality is smaller than in Moscow and St Petersburg and suggests that civic participation in local governance is more tightly controlled in Samara, since PCBs less frequently become spaces that challenge state policy and

¹⁰⁰ Interview S9.

instead inculcate the consensual relationship between society and the state envisioned in the discourse.

Like Moscow and St Petersburg, the local regime is a key factor in shaping the possibilities for civic engagement: in Samara, it is characterised by a high level of disappointment among citizens in the previous leader and a new governor attempting to please the President, galvanise citizens and address the city's numerous social problems. His discourse of civic engagement thus faithfully rearticulated the federal level in terms of the legitimating narrative of the need to become more competitive and that state and society must unite to improve quality of life in the region. As elsewhere, an active citizenry was presented as a response to the challenges of the new post-Soviet era and was contrasted with state-society relations in the old Communist regime, in which citizens were depicted as passive and dependent on the state. Of the three regional leaders, the Samara governor most enthusiastically advocated the development of the PCB network, even appearing to view it as a substitute for representative democracy at the local level. For him, PCBs were the essence of what local governance should look like.

This enthusiasm was largely, though not exclusively, mirrored in the discussions with respondents during interviews. Of the three case studies, Samara respondents were the least critical of both PCBs and the Putin regime in general, and the understanding of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* as a process of assisting the authorities was common among members. Critical respondents attributed this to the fact that there were fewer people willing publically to contravene the state's position on public policy and disillusionment with the fact that local affairs seemed to be controlled by the Kremlin. Critical respondents recalled how their attempts to instantiate a grassroots understanding of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* in local governance structures were co-opted by local leaders, much in the same way as the *pravozashchitniki's* efforts to enshrine this understanding of the concept into the law on *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* of prisons. This suggests that, as with participation at the national level, input from citizens is welcomed in Samara up to a certain point, and is considered an important element of public sector reform, but is halted when it is perceived to challenge or threaten state power. This is a key feature of authoritarian neoliberal governance.

However, in Samara, too, PCBs could occasionally be used to hold authorities to account: I showed how the Public Budget Experts occasionally

exposed corruption and inculcated a sense of empowerment in their members. It is unsurprising that this initiative was successful because the governor also advocates greater involvement of citizens in the management of local budgets. It demonstrates that, as with the other case studies, successful civic engagement in governance occurs when local authorities are interested in the particular policy area.

In sum, *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* in Samara's PCBs most closely corresponded to the vision of state-society relations advanced by the federal and regional authorities, with fewer respondents detailing confrontational practices than in Moscow or St Petersburg. In contrast to Moscow, Samara respondents were more closely aligned with the governor's discourse in their perception of the role of citizens in governance and, in contrast to St Petersburg, where both the governor and respondents articulated mistrust of one another, most respondents in Samara engaged uncritically with PCBs. This suggests that there is a tighter level of authoritarian control in Samara than in the other two case studies, since there is minimal enactment of practices that diverge from the state discourse.

Finally, while, given the heterogeneity of local regimes across the Federation, it is imprudent to generalise about the ability of PCBs to help shape the local agenda in the Russian regions, the analysis presented here nonetheless suggests that regional PCBs may be less influential in local governance than those in the political centre due to, first, the strength of the authoritarian political power structures linking the region to the centre and, second, the lower numbers of active citizens. Despite these factors, Samara's PCBs cannot be dismissed entirely as mechanisms for the co-optation of 'civil society' and must be examined on a case-by-case basis for their ability to affect the policy-making process.

Conclusion

With this thesis, I have departed from the more common approach to studies of Russian institutional design, which, resting on the residual teleology of the transition paradigm, have tended to focus on the depletion and distortion of Russia's democratic institutions as a means to understand how state power is maintained in the contemporary regime.¹ Instead, through the inductive study of new avenues for public political participation, I have revealed practices of participation in governance through which state power is both maintained and contested, which would not be captured using the lens of democratisation (since they occur outside of typical democratic institutions). The analysis presented in this thesis has shown that these practices combine elements of the neoliberal 'good governance' agenda with the country's own historic governing traditions in order to incorporate market principles into governance practices that retain a high, but not absolute, level of control over policy outcomes. It has thus demonstrated that PCBs exemplify new (limited) participatory mechanisms for Russian governance in the neoliberal era. With this, the thesis has demonstrated that the substantive study of novel institutional mechanisms is equally important to the study of power and control in authoritarian regimes as explorations of the manipulation of elections or the management of civil society and, consequently, has developed a concept that enables discussion of such mechanisms. The concept 'authoritarian neoliberal governance' can enable a greater understanding of the means through which the Russian state retains power while also embracing market principles. This conclusion reviews the central arguments of each chapter before addressing the four questions set out in the introduction and showing how the thesis contributes to existing debates on the relationship between state and society in Putin's Russia, the nature of participatory mechanisms in authoritarian regimes, and the relationship between capitalism and democracy more broadly.

Chapter One placed the development of new participatory mechanisms in historical context and showed that although institutions with limited ability to affect state policy have been a feature of Russian governance for the past 150 years, contemporary mechanisms are unique in that they have emerged during the market

¹ These works have been reviewed on pp. 95 – 98.

reform of the Communist state bureaucracy. Products of the state-driven processes of increasing authoritarianism and neoliberalisation, PCBs aim to provide local and federal government departments with enough information to produce effective public policy by enlisting citizens in the policy-making process in ways that do not challenge the 'power vertical'. The concept *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* has been employed to refer to the practices of assistance and oversight that post-Soviet participatory institutions are intended to produce.

Chapter Two conceptualised the process of building public policy networks by the non-democratic market state as 'authoritarian neoliberal governance', which it defined as the process by which the authoritarian regime allows limited participation in the public policy-making process as a means to offset its reduced monopoly on the requisite information brought about by the marketization of the state bureaucracy. It argued that the near-globally accepted public sector reform package comprising neoliberal policies of privatisation of state assets, outsourcing of state functions to NGOs and businesses, and the decentralisation of powers to local government have reduced the state's ability to create effective public policy and have thus increased the need for states to create mechanisms that boost citizen input, including in authoritarian regimes such as Russia. However, it also stated that a key feature of authoritarian regimes was limited pluralism, which refers to the state's ability to determine who can participate in public affairs and to set the public agenda. It therefore argued that PCBs are products of the hybridisation of global policies of neoliberal governance and Russia's domestic authoritarian governing style. It also suggested that such processes are not limited to the case of Russia, but to any state in which the dual governing agendas of authoritarianism and neoliberalism are present.

Adopting the Critical Discourse Analytic lens, Chapter Three addressed the emergence of the Kremlin's contemporary conception of civic engagement in governance in order to reveal the roots of this discourse. It showed that contemporary portrayals of an active citizenry that assists the authorities in the execution of centrally determined tasks recall aspects of the Soviet-era discourses of *rabochyi* and *narodnyi kontrol'*, which also posited a consensual relationship between citizens and the state. However, the Putinist discourse expands the Soviet-era discourse by presenting civic engagement not solely the monitoring the execution of centrally determined tasks, but also the actual performance of those

tasks. , Further, in contrast to Soviet discourses, which legitimated this relationship with reference to Marxist-Leninist theory (specifically, the collapse of the distinction between rulers and ruled), the Kremlin's discourse is legitimated according to a logic of international competitiveness. The chapter showed that international discourses of 'good governance' stressed the importance of increasing civic participation in governance as a means to enhance economic prosperity. As a member of norm-promoting international bodies, signatory of governance treaties and recipient of loans with conditionality, the chapter argued that Russia has been heavily influenced by this agenda and that the Kremlin's narrative legitimating new mechanisms for civic engagement is drawn from here.

Chapter Four explored the struggle between citizens' groups and the government for hegemony over the meanings of the concept *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*. It showed that the concept as it is used by citizens' groups refers to a process of holding the authorities accountable to the law and thus assumes a contentious, rather than consensual, relationship between society and the state. However, it also showed that citizens' initiatives are frequently co-opted by the state by enshrining in legislation a version of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* that dovetails with the state's broader discourse of civic engagement in governance. It argued that the recent law 'On the Foundations of *Obshchestvennyi Kontrol'* in the Russian Federation' represents the latest attempt to fix the discourse, and therefore the practices, of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* by codifying modes of civic participation in governance and linking them to the growing network of authoritarian neoliberal governance.

Chapter Five explored the extent to which a gap exists between the portrayal of civic engagement in governance in state discourse and practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* enacted through PCBs in Russia's two most affluent and populous cities, Moscow and St Petersburg. Through a comparison of the regional leaders' articulations on the subject of civic participation and the experiences of PCB members articulated to me in interviews, I found that in both cities, while the authorities claim that mechanisms for civic engagement allow citizens to assist the authorities in matters of governance, PCBs could occasionally be used by citizens modestly to shape state behaviour. I also demonstrated that the local regime significantly shapes the scope for the social practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'*, by showing that the practices diverged significantly in Moscow and St Petersburg,

with the latter hampered by a historic tension between autocratic local government and a liberal, opposition-minded public sphere.

Chapter Six explored this gap in the context of a regional case study, Samara, in which levels of income and civic activism were significantly lower. Here, I found that there was greater conformity between the discourse of the governor and the practices described by respondents, with the latter tending to recount practices of assisting the authorities in the fulfilment of tasks, rather than of attempting to shape the public agenda and influence policy outcomes. I argued that this indicates that there is a higher level of authoritarian control in Samara than in Moscow or St Petersburg since few alternative representations of state-society relations were expressed.

What conclusions can be drawn from this and how do they speak to existing debates on state-society relations in Russia, civic participation in non-democratic countries and on public sector reform more generally? In order to structure this discussion, I return to the four questions posed in the introduction and consider each in turn. They are:

- How does the Kremlin explain and legitimate the emergence of PCBs?
- What practices are produced through PCBs and how do they correspond to those articulated by the Putin regime?
- What can the development of PCBs tell us about the kind of bureaucracy emerging in Russia's capitalist but non-democratic state?
- What can the development of PCBs tell us about state-society relations in conditions of authoritarian neoliberalism?

To consider the first question, I have shown that PCBs were introduced as part of a broader package of market reforms of the Soviet-era public sector. They have been promoted by the Kremlin as the most important of a number of new mechanisms that aim to increase civic engagement in governance. Civic engagement is deemed a central means by which to make the country more competitive internationally, and is conceived as the process by which citizens may assist the authorities in socially useful but essentially apolitical tasks. In order to create this new discourse, it has combined an expanded version of the Soviet-era concept of *narodnyi kontrol'*, which referred to a process of checking and reviewing the fulfilment of state policy, with international discourses of 'good governance', which posit increased civic participation in governance as key to a successful

marketized public sector. According to the Kremlin, and to the regional leaders rearticulating this discourse, civic participation in governance is key to the international competitiveness of Russia.

This finding builds on the approach taken by existing studies of public chambers, reviewed in the Introduction, which examined them in terms of their (negative) impact on the institutional components of Western democracy, namely civil society² and representative institutions.³ While I have shown that the expansion of the PCB network has indeed accompanied the censure of certain (chiefly Western-funded) NGOs and the abolition or curtailment of opportunities for electoral participation, I have added to the explanations proffered in these studies by showing that the market reform of the public sector is also a key factor in the government's motivation to create PCBs, a factor which has hitherto been excluded in analyses of these bodies. Indeed, studies of market reforms of local government in democracies have shown that mechanisms of civic participation constitute a key area of neoliberal public sector design; my analysis has shown that this is also the case in Russia and hints at their presence in other non-democracies too.⁴ Therefore, while PCBs certainly have implications for representative democracy in Russia, insofar as they reduce the need for the state to gain feedback from society via elections, they must be seen first of all as a Russian articulation of the global trend towards the marketization of state bureaucracy.

A consideration of the second question, regarding the practices produced by PCBs and their correspondence to state discourse must be qualified with the proviso that there is a vast number of PCBs in Russia, most of which have been in operation for less than five years; PCB practices are therefore very much at the stage of emergence and consolidation. Nonetheless, it is possible to draw some conclusions about the kinds of practices that are developing. First, practices themselves are

² A. Evans, 'The First Steps of Russia's Public Chamber: Representation or Coordination?', *Demokratizatsiya*, (Fall, 2008); J. Richter, 'Putin and the Public Chamber', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 1, (January – March 2009); J. Richter, 'The Ministry of Civil Society? The Public Chamber and the Regions', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 56, No. 6, (November/December, 2009).

³ R. Sakwa, *The Crisis of Russian Democracy: The Dual State, Factionalism and the Medvedev Secession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); N. Petrov, M. Lipman and H. Hale, 'Over-managed Democracy in Russia: Governance Implications of Hybrid Regimes', Carnegie Papers, Russia and Eurasia Program No. 106, (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010); B. Taylor, *State-Building in Putin's Russia: Policing and Coercion after Communism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁴ B. Denters and L. Rose (eds.), *Comparing Local Governance: Trends and Developments* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005); M. Geddes, 'Neoliberalism and Local Governance: Cross-National Perspectives and Speculations', *Policy Studies*, Vol. 26, Nos. 3/4 (2005).

varied and range from active participation involving both confrontation and collaboration with authorities in matters relating to local governance to the passive acceptance of government decisions. Their ability to enable citizens to shape policy depends on three factors: whether there is a significant minority of vocal, independent-minded individuals willing to critique the decisions and activities of the authorities; whether the topic discussed by a particular PCB is of interest to the authorities; and whether the authorities are willing to adopt the recommendations made by the PCB. These factors are determined by the region's local regime and vary significantly across the Federation. If these three factors are present, PCBs can act as vehicles for the promotion of citizens' interests and allow members to help shape policy decisions; if they are absent, PCBs at best end up approving the decisions made by the authorities, at worst they do not convene at all. Furthermore, the types of issues that PCBs are able to influence tend to be relatively apolitical ones that do not threaten local regime stability. Thus, whether or not citizens can provide input into public policy-making through PCBs is completely dependent on the authorities. To make a tentative generalisation across regional PCBs, (qualified by the fact that the research presented here is certainly not representative of the network in its entirety), civic participation in governance as operationalised through PCBs, though extant, is limited and partial. This is a substantive contribution to understandings of the workings of regional governance mechanisms, and confirms the findings of recent studies of civic participation in public life in Russia, which have noted that Putin administration prioritises certain social actors over others in an attempt to operationalise a vision of state-society relations that is absent of social conflict.⁵

However, this finding must be qualified by the fact that the expansion of the PCB network was considered by the majority of those I interviewed to be a generally positive step towards building a constructive relationship between citizens and the authorities, even if they considered them to be in need of reform. At the same time, almost no respondents shared the view of the role PCBs should play in the relationship between the authorities and citizens as that promulgated by the

⁵ J. Richter, 'The Ministry of Civil Society? The Public Chamber and the Regions', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 56, No. 6, (November/December, 2009); S. Henderson, 'Civil Society in Russia: State-Society Relations in the Post-Yeltsin Era', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (May/June 2011); Salmenniemi, S., 'Struggling for Citizenship: Civic Participation and the State in Russia', *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (2010); Chebankova, E., *Civil Society in Putin's Russia*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2013).

Kremlin. For the majority of PCB members I interviewed, PCBs constituted a useful avenue through which to advance a 'civic position' and to make government fairer. Furthermore, most respondents were able to recall several occasions when a course of state action was modified as a result of a PCB's activities. They thus saw PCB membership as a potentially contentious activity, perceiving such bodies as a legitimate locus from which to challenge the state.

How to account for the divergence between state and societal perceptions of PCBs? My findings suggest, first, that in countries with a history of authoritarian tendencies, the greater the diversity of actors included in governance structures and processes, the less likely these structures will be to operate as intended by the state. (Indeed, I have shown that this has proven to be the case both of the *zemstvos* and of the Soviet-era mechanisms.) Second, it shows that this gap in the governing chain can enable citizens to advance alternative agendas and that, in a regime in which citizens have few opportunities to provide input into policy-making processes, even controlled and partial mechanisms, such as PCBs, are embraced by citizens. While this thesis focussed only on three case studies and more work needs to be done on the extent to which PCBs allow citizens to alter policy outcomes across the Federation, this insight adds to the body of work exploring practices of contentious politics in Russia.⁶ In contrast to these studies, which have focussed on more 'traditional' forms of contention, such as street demonstrations, strikes and civil disobedience, my thesis shows that contentious agendas are also advanced through activities that do not engender an unequivocally adversarial relationship to the state. In this sense, it builds upon those works that examine practices of contention in non-democratic states that combine both consent in and resistance to the regime.⁷ Like these works, it shows that voicing contentious claims through institutions sanctioned by the state provides unique possibilities for citizens to make small but successful demands on the state because, first, successful claims voiced

⁶ See, for instance, M. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); G. Robertson, *The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes: Managing Dissent in Post-Communist Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); K. Koesel and V. Bunce, 'Putin, Popular Protests, and Political Trajectories in Russia: A Comparative Perspective', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 4, (2012). See also S. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movement and Contentious Politics*, 3rd Edition, (New York: Cambridge University Press).

⁷ K. O'Brien and L. Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); J. Straughn, "'Taking the State at its Word": The Arts of Consensual Contention in the German Democratic Republic', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 110, No. 6, (2005).

using the state's own apparatus cannot be wholly adversarial and, second, the activists making the claims are speaking from sites that have been formally endorsed by the government. Therefore, these claims are not always easy for authorities to ignore. In contrast to scholars of Russian politics that dismiss PCBs as 'substitute' institutions, I argue that they must be taken into account when considering state power and civic agency in contemporary Russia.⁸

The use of PCBs to advance alternative agendas corresponded to the operationalisation of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* advanced by civic groups in the early stages of the development of the PMC law and enacted during the movement to monitor the parliamentary and Presidential elections. In the instances, *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* became a process of holding government officials accountable before the law. The authorities, by contrast, viewed *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* as a process of checking and reviewing state activities and decisions. The practices inside PCBs corresponded to a softened version of both conceptions: authorities on the one hand could receive vital policy input and harness citizens' expertise in the drafting of legislation, while citizens could sometimes respectfully challenge state decisions and bring issues they considered important to the discussion table. However, the structural dependency on the authorities meant that this more critical conception could only be operationalised with the consent of the authorities. The thesis has shown that the concept *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* is central to understanding the activities of PCBs and the role of citizens in governance envisaged by the Kremlin more broadly.

The third question addressed the changing architecture of the post-Soviet public sector. Here, I have shown that post-Soviet public sector reform is characterised by two logics: authoritarianism and neoliberalism. Its neoliberal logic is evidenced by policies such as the privatisation of certain state-owned assets, the decentralisation of budget responsibility to local governments, and the outsourcing of welfare provision to 'socially-oriented NGOs'. The broader authoritarian logic is characterised by moves to control who can participate in political decision-making, such as the restriction of gubernatorial elections, the replacement of elected mayors with city managers, and the vilification of Western-funded NGOs. I have shown that these two logics interact with one another to produce novel and innovative

⁸ Petrov, Lipman, and Hale, 'Over-managed Democracy in Russia: Governance Implications of Hybrid Regimes'; Taylor, *State-Building in Putin's Russia*.

governing institutions, such as PCBs. This finding dovetails with studies pointing out that reform of the Soviet-era welfare state is being conducted according to certain neoliberal principles, but that these policies are being adapted to fit within the country's existing governing norms.⁹ However, I have also built on these studies by focussing on civic participation in the activities of the public sector as a key element of the neoliberal welfare regime. This focus has required greater conversation between two discrete bodies of work on Russia: studies of civil society and studies of public sector reform. I have argued that, as the state reduces its role in direct welfare provision to citizens, NGOs, civil society groups and ordinary citizens have been encouraged by the state to assist in the fulfilment of those functions. In other words, reform of the public sector along market principles contributes to the expansion of the NGO sphere. It is commonly accepted among Western scholars that civil society is a key component in the institutional architecture of democratic states¹⁰ and consequently the development of Russian NGOs has most frequently been analysed through the prism of civil society and democratisation.¹¹ My thesis adds to those works which argue that the expansion of NGO activity must be seen primarily in the context of the marketization of the state, rather than the consolidation of democracy, an insight which has yet to penetrate studies of Russian civil society.¹²

In order to bring together the ideas of public sector reform and civic activism, I referred to the literature on public governance, which has conceptualised the ways in which a diversity of actors are steered by the state in the production and delivery of public policy. Public governance thus throws the intersections between civic activism and state arbitration into relief (whereas studies of civil society tend to

⁹ L. Cook, *Postcommunist Welfare States: Reform Politics in Russia and Eastern Europe* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007); J. Hemment, 'Soviet-Style Neoliberalism? Nashi, Youth Voluntarism and the Restructuring of Social Welfare in Russia', *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 56, No. 6 (November/December 2009); A. Cerami, 'Welfare State Developments in the Russian Federation: Oil-Led Social Policy and the "Russian Miracle"', *Social Policy and Administration*, Vol. 43, No. 2, April 2009.

¹⁰ See, for instance, J. Cohen and A. Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (New York: MIT Press, 1992).

¹¹ M. Howard, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); A. Evans, L. Henry, and L. Sundstrom (eds.), *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2006); L. Sundstrom, *Funding Civil Society: Foreign Assistance and NGO Development in Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); A. Uhlin, *Post-Soviet Civil Society: Democratization in Russia and the Baltic States* (Oxford: Routledge, 2006).

¹² D. Rieff, 'The False Dawn of Civil Society', *The Nation*, Vol. 268, 22 February 1999; M. Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), pp. 93; F. Powell, *The Politics of Civil Society: Neoliberalism or Social Left?* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2007).

prioritise the former and studies of public sector reform focus on the latter). In order to capture the specifics of this nexus in Russia's non-democratic, market state, I developed the concept 'authoritarian neoliberal governance', which refers to practices that include civic voices in matters relating to public policy but that also attempt to limit and control such participation. The concept contrasts with the standard assumption held by free market advocates, that open trade and the forms of governance required to sustain it lead to the democratisation of the state over time.¹³ Instead, the thesis has shown that free markets do not always produce democracy and, in fact, innovative non-democratic mechanisms can be developed in order to bypass institutional democracy, obtaining feedback, resolving conflict, and distributing goods in ways that do not require elections. Here, the thesis contributes and builds upon the small body of research that explores non-electoral participatory mechanisms in non-democracies.¹⁴ These works have shown that such mechanisms have been proliferating in China and Southeast Asia and enable the state to receive feedback on policy proposals in the absence of feedback via elections. However, while these works cite market reforms as a general background factor to the proliferation of participatory mechanisms, they do not cite them as a causal factor in their production. I have argued that market reforms of the public sector are equally important in explaining the proliferation of these bodies as the absence of elections.

Given that the concept 'authoritarian neoliberal governance' can be applied to any state exhibiting both authoritarian and neoliberal tendencies in public policy, there is much scope for the exploration of state-driven public participatory mechanisms in non-democratic market states. Although I have briefly mentioned

¹³ Chapter Three reviewed this assumption as advanced by intergovernmental organisations. In the academic world, building on the modernisation theorists discussed in the introduction to Chapter Two, more recent work has called not only for economic prosperity, but specifically for free markets in order to consolidate democracy. See M. Mousseau, 'Market Prosperity, Democratic Consolidation and Democratic Peace', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 44, No. 4, (August 2000); C. Coyne, *After War: The Political Economy of Exporting Democracy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 181; F. Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad*, 2nd Edition, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2007); M. Mandelbaum, *Democracy's Good Name: The Rise and Risks of the World's Most Popular Form of Government*, (New York: Perseus, PublicAffairs, Ltd., 2007), pp. 127; P. Levy, 'Economic Integration and Incipient Democracy', American Enterprise Institute, AIE Working Paper No. 142, 26 March 2008, http://www.aei.org/files/2008/03/26/20080327_IncipientDemocracy20Mar08.pdf (accessed 24 August 2014); J. Tomasi, *Free Market Fairness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

¹⁴ K. Jayasuriya and G. Rodan, 'Beyond Hybrid Regimes: More Participation, Less Contestation in South-East Asia', *Democratization*, Vol. 14, No. 5, (November 2007); B. He and M. Warren, 'Authoritarian Deliberation: The Deliberative Turn in Chinese Political Development', *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (June 2011).

the existence of PCB networks in other post-Soviet states, the extent to which authoritarian neoliberal governance is present as a mode of state behaviour beyond the Russian case is hypothetical at this stage. However, on the basis of this and other research into varieties of neoliberalism, 'glocalisations' and other approaches which view neoliberalisation as a process of hybridisation of global norms, it is reasonable to propose that a plethora of institutional mechanisms have been developed that reproduce the global norm of increased civic engagement in governance for domestic authoritarian settings.¹⁵ A comparative perspective on authoritarian neoliberal governance would raise such questions as 'Do authoritarian states with a high rate of neoliberal public sector reform exhibit more developed public consultative networks than those that retain a more traditional public sector?' If so, how much influence do these bodies have in public policy-making? If not, how do authoritarian market states gather enough information to make effective public policy? The current surge in Eurasian regionalism is a potential breeding ground for the transferral of practices of authoritarian neoliberal governance. In particular, the case of Kazakhstan would make for an interesting starting point from which to deepen the analysis in this thesis, since the country's regime is characterised by an unrestrained political executive¹⁶ that has embraced neoliberal public sector reforms.¹⁷ Indeed, Linda Cook's work has shown that Kazakhstan adopted a more radical public sector reform programme than Russia.¹⁸ One might assume, then, that the Kazakh state bureaucracy would include a set of state-controlled public participatory mechanisms at least as well-developed as in Russia. This is certainly an area for further research.

To consider the final question - what can the development of PCBs tell us about state-society relations in conditions of authoritarian neoliberalism? - the emergence and proliferation of PCBs suggests that, as in other countries espousing a neoliberal agenda, post-Soviet citizens are expected to be active, rational, self-

¹⁵ See Chapter Two.

¹⁶ See, for instance, M. Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise?* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002); N. Melvin, 'Authoritarian Pathways in Central Asia: A Comparison of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan' in Y. Ro'i (ed.), *Democracy and Pluralism in Muslim Eurasia* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2004); S. Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite* (London: IB Taurus, 2005).

¹⁷ L. Cook, *Postcommunist Welfare States: Reform Politics in Russia and Eastern Europe* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007); S. Bhuiyan and F. Amagoh, 'Public Sector Reform in Kazakhstan: Issues and Perspectives', *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 24, No. 3, (2011).

¹⁸ Cook, *Postcommunist Welfare States*, pp. 239.

limiting and able to participate in performing the functions the state no longer considers itself able to perform. This is particularly evident in the Kremlin's and the Moscow Mayor's discourse discussed in Chapters Three and Five, in which citizens were urged to shake off their Soviet-era passivity and involve themselves in participatory governance. However, Chapter One's discussion of civic participation in governance during the Soviet Union suggests that the perception of the Soviet citizen as a passive recipient of state policy is somewhat inaccurate and that in fact millions of citizens were participating in groups that helped to shape the Soviet policy agenda. Indeed, the Soviet and neoliberal conceptions of the role of the citizen in governance are remarkably similar: both conceive of the citizen as a willing assistant to state-designed projects. This indicates that the image of the Soviet citizen as passive is an ideological tool employed by the Kremlin to create the image of a new era of governance and to legitimate cuts to welfare provision. The Kremlin implies that Soviet citizens were dependent on the state, which was what made the Soviet state unsustainable, and now, in the harsh climate of global capitalism, Russians must not rely on the state for welfare, but contribute towards the provision of local services instead. This steering of citizens' behaviour towards self-governance in conditions of neoliberalism has been termed 'governmentality' by Michel Foucault and has been analysed extensively in relation to Western countries.¹⁹ However, practices of governmentality in the case of Russia have hitherto only received scant treatment.²⁰ While this thesis does not pretend to add to this nascent field of study, it does, however indicate that a deeper exploration of post-Soviet governmentality has great potential.

Following on from this, while the post-Soviet citizen's role in governance is constructed in Kremlin rhetoric as part of a decisive break from the past and a response to the unique contemporary political climate, the thesis has shown that the relationship between society and the state presented in Soviet and post-Soviet state discourse is virtually the same. Both conceive of a unified state and citizenry

¹⁹ The tendency neoliberalism to require self-governance has been conceptualised by Michael Foucault as neoliberal governmentality and has received extensive treatment in the context of liberal democratic states. See, for instance, T. Hamann, 'Neoliberalism, Governmentality and Ethics', *Foucault Studies*, No. 6, February 2009; N. Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 145.

²⁰ See A. Yurchak, 'Russian Neoliberal: The Entrepreneurial Ethic and the Spirit of "True Careerism"', *The Russian Review*, Vol. 62, (January 2003); T. Matza, 'Moscow's Echo: Technologies of the Self, Publics and Politics on the Russian Talk Show', *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (2009); T. Matza, "'Good Individualism'? Psychology, Ethics and Neoliberalism in Postsocialist Russia', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 39, No. 4, (November 2012).

and seek to mobilise citizens in the fulfilment of tasks determined by the state. The difference is that Soviet citizens were acting in the name of Communism and contemporary citizens are acting in the name of the economy. This points to the fundamental malleability of neoliberal norms: as Aihwa Ong has shown in her masterful contribution to the recontextualisation of neoliberal policies around the world, they are compatible with an enormous diversity of political and discursive regimes.²¹

I will allow myself conclude the thesis with a brief, perhaps self-indulgent moment of speculation about the trajectory of the PCB network in Russia. This network has already entrenched itself as an important feature of local, regional and national governance, and recent legislation enshrining practices of *obshchestvennyi kontrol'* into all government structure suggests that its importance is likely to grow. What, then, is the outlook for the PCB network? Will the practices of authoritarian neoliberal governance allow the regime to strengthen itself by continuing market reforms and simultaneously neutralising dissent? Conversely, will limited participation inculcate a sense of democratic entitlement in citizens and encourage them to challenge the regime? Or will the Russian regime continue in much the same vein, that is, characterised by partial control, partial pluralism, weak institution-building, and legitimised by a hybridised form of neoliberal ideology?

Under the first scenario, the development of PCBs may grow into a new model of direct democracy, similar to workers' councils during the Russian Revolution (also envisaged by the Samara Governor). PCBs could become the central sites for policy debate and public participation in the country, allowing the Russian state to continue the evisceration of representative democratic institutions, and signalling the foundation of a distinctly Russian form of democracy (or *narodovlastie*), such has been called for by Putin in the past. The recent adoption of the Law 'On the Foundations of *Obshchestvennyi Kontrol'*" suggests that steps are already being taken in this direction.

Under the second scenario, the growing role of PCBs in policy formation may provide an incubator for alternative political imaginaries and slowly breed dissent. Increasing numbers of citizens wanting to effect political life in their localities may join up and, as with *zemstvo* members, become frustrated with the partial and

²¹ A. Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

limited influence accorded to them and may end up demanding a greater level of participation. This could prove a significant challenge to the regime. Indeed the expansion of limited participation in governance instigated the collapse of both the absolutist and Communist regimes.

My view is that the second scenario is highly unlikely for two reasons. First, although the legislation on PCBs is fluctuating a great deal, the structural dependency of PCBs on authorities the means that were PCBs to demand a greater role in policy-making, they could immediately be disbanded by the authorities. Second, the present regime enjoys an extremely high level of support among citizens, particularly after the acquisition of Crimea, a fact which suggests there is little desire to challenge the regime either through PCBs or elsewhere. The first scenario is more likely, though ultimately still improbable since the contradictions and vague phrasing in the laws on PCBs lead one to presume that these bodies will remain institutionally weak and dependent on the authorities. PCBs would require a substantial amount of reform and promotion among citizens in order to become the alternative to representative democracy conceived by some of members of the government. My conclusion is that the emergence and proliferation of PCBs represent the consolidation, rather than the transformation of Russia's existing regime.

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M2: *Za Prava Cheloveka*, Moscow, 20 July 2012.
M3: *Grazhdanskoye Sodeistviye, Memorial*, Moscow, 20 July 2012.
M4: *Grazhdanin i Armeya*, Moscow, 23 July 2012.
M5: *Environmental Activist*, Moscow, 25 July, 2012.
M6: *Memorial Pravozashchitnyi Tsentr*, Pilorama Festival, Perm, 29 July 2012.
M7: *Nezavisimyi Ekspertno-pravovoi Sovet*, Moscow, 28 August 2012.
M8: *Former Federal Human Rights Ombudsman*, Moscow, 29 August 2012.
M10: *Fond "Obshchestvennyi Verdikt"*, Moscow, 6 November 2012.
M11: *Tyur'ma i Volya*, Moscow, 7 November 2012.
M12: *Tyur'ma i Volya*, Moscow, 7 November 2012.
M13: *Economist*, Moscow State University, Moscow, 9 November 2012.
M14: *Assotsiatsiya "Agora"*, Moscow, 9 November 2012.
M15: *Institut Prav Cheloveka*, Moscow, 9 November 2012.

St Petersburg

- SPB1: *Tsentr "Strategiya"*, St Petersburg, 7 July 2012.
SPB2: *Nauchno-Informatsionnyi Tsentr "Memorial"*, St Petersburg, 13 July 2012.
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SPB9: *Pravozashchitnyi Sovet Sankt-Peterburga*, St Petersburg, 24 August 2012.
SPB11: *Memorial*, St Petersburg, 7 September 2012.
SPB12: *Vyssshaya Shkola Ekonomiki*, St Petersburg, 29 October 2012.

Samara

- S1: *GOLOS*, Samara, 9 August 2012.
S2: *Yabloko Samara*, Samara, 11 August, 2012.

- S3: *Assotsiatsiya "Desnitsa"*, Samara, 13 August 2012.
- S4: *Zasekin.ru*, Samara, 14 August 2012.
- S5: *Assotsiatsiya "Povolzh'ye"*, Samara, 14 August 2012.
- S6: *Samarskaya Zelyonaya Liga*, Samara, 31 October 2012.
- S7: *Assambleiya Narodov Samarskoi Oblasti*, Samara, 1 November 2012.
- S8: Freelance Journalist, Samara, 1 November 2012.
- S9: Lawyer, Samara, 2 November 2012.
- S10: Samara Human Rights Ombudsman Bureau, Samara, 2 November 2012.